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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**THE MUSLIM BROTHEHOOD IN EGYPT, JORDAN
AND SYRIA: A COMPARISON**

by

Billy Fondren

March 2009

Thesis Advisor:

Co-Advisor:

Anne Baylouny

James Russell

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE March 2009	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Jordan and Syria: A Comparison			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Billy Fondren				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) <p>The Islamic group the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) exists in many countries around the world but each group is fundamentally different than its parent organization; why is this so? Like-minded organizations that are built upon common guiding principles superficially have little reason to change. The goal of this thesis is to understand why MB groups in three different countries did in fact change and become something highly differentiated from their progenitor group. After a thorough examination of the MB in Egypt, Syria and Jordan, it was discovered that the type of government that was in place, plus demographic factors, were highly instrumental in the formation and subsequent development of these groups. The level of restriction imposed by the governments on their populations helped to determine the militancy level of the MB group within their borders. The demographic makeup of the population of the country also had a profound and deterministic effect on the acceptable <i>modus operandi</i> that the MB groups could employ to achieve their political goals.</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Islamist, Gradualist-Pragmatic, Demographics, <i>Tawid, Jihad, jam'iyah</i> , Nasser, Siba'i, Islamic Action Front (IAF)			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 91	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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**THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN EGYPT, JORDAN AND SYRIA: A
COMPARISON**

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Captain, United States Air Force
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

The Islamic group the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) exists in many countries around the world, but each group is fundamentally different than its parent organization; why is this so? Like-minded organizations that are built upon common guiding principles superficially have little reason to change. The goal of this thesis is to understand why MB groups in three different countries did in fact change and become something highly differentiated from their progenitor group. After a thorough examination of the MB in Egypt, Syria and Jordan, it was discovered that the type of government that was in place, plus demographic factors, were highly instrumental in the formation and subsequent development of these groups. The level of restriction imposed by the governments on their populations helped to determine the militancy level of the MB group within their borders. The demographic makeup of the population of the country also had a profound and deterministic effect on the acceptable *modus operandi* that the MB groups could employ to achieve their political goals.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with any thesis written with the objective of obtaining a Master's degree there are many people, other than the author, that are instrumental in its creation. First and foremost, I would like to extend thanks to my thesis advisors Professors Anne Marie Baylouny and James Russell. The advantage of your deep insight in the subject matter aided in unexpected ways and helped smooth out the sometimes rocky ground discovered in the process of writing. I would also like to thank the Naval Post Graduate School on providing, without the slightest hint of exaggeration, the best education I have ever received. The professors teaching at the Naval Postgraduate School truly represent a credit to Academia as a whole.

Next, I would like to give my unending gratitude to Donna Cuadrez. Without her adept guidance, I would still be floundering around helplessly in the unending void of cyberspace trying to decipher the black art known as 'formatting'. Donna, my thanks to you knows no bounds and you have my eternal gratefulness.

Finally, to my family without whom I never would have embarked on this convoluted journey. They have kept my feeble mind from slipping into insanity and have ensured my feet remained on the correct path. Without them, assuredly, I would have wandered away without even noticing I had gotten lost.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR PROBLEM TO BE STUDIED

Of all the changes that have occurred in the United States post-September 11, 2001, possibly the least expected would be the affect on the vocabulary of our cultural lexicon. Many unfamiliar words, previously constrained to be buried deeply within the inner realm of academia, have crept into the conversations of the proverbial ‘man on the street’. Words such as ‘Sharia’ and ‘Imam’ can be heard or read almost routinely depending from which form of media one chooses to garner information. Another such term is ‘Islamist’ or ‘Islamist group’. The term ‘Islamist’ appears to have multiple connotations; one must pay close attention to the speaker’s context in order to derive the appropriate meaning.

The late 19th and 20th century saw the rise of a powerful form of nationalism that planted the seeds that eventually grew into the specter of two exceedingly deadly World Wars. The countries of the Middle East were not to be left out in the frenzied promotion of political ideologies that gripped so much of the world during those years. While the West struggled with the competing ideologies of communism or fascism; the Middle East saw the rise of something called Arab Nationalism. This turned out to be a powerfully moving political force until the Arab’s lose in the 1967 war with Israel, along with other important political events in the region, after which it continually contracted to the point where it was no longer the inspiring force it once was. This history demonstrates that, along with the substantial changes in international dynamics wrought by the events of September 11, 2001, there is the need for an investigation into certain groups. Specifically studying Islamist groups has become paramount, if we are to successfully understand who these groups are and what they stand for. This study is necessary if for no other reason to discover which of these associations espouse the use of violence or not in the propagation of their ideas.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is such a group and holds the distinction of being the largest Islamist group in the world. Strictly speaking some Islamist groups, like the MB, are not at all new and have been influencing their countries of origin, among others, for decades. A few of these groups have also affected, to a greater or lesser degree, the international scene, though none as quickly or profoundly as al-Qaida with their attacks on the United States. In conjunction with the need for cultivating a deeper knowledge of Islamist groups and what they stand for, an in-depth investigation of what these groups, which are identified below, believe and what affects their behavior would be equally beneficial. The following thesis will attempt to address these very issues.

The three groups that have been chosen for study are as follows:

- The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt
- The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and their political arm (Islamic Action Front (IAF))
- The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria

The choice of these specific groups may look strange given that the MB in both Syria and Jordan have an affiliation with the first group, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which is the oldest and largest Islamic group in existence.¹ But this choice is in keeping with the aim of studying how Islamic groups adjust their behavior in regards to national political pressure or policies. Though the MB in Jordan and Syria did draw their ideological beginnings from the original MB, they are now quite different from their parent group which operates in Egypt. Choosing groups that superficially look similar acts as a controlling variable to demonstrate how the development of Islamist groups is molded by aspects that are country specific.

The very fact that differences exist between the groups is part of the investigation. Why are these groups different and do they operate with different aims in mind? Did each chapter of the MB in different countries begin with similar objectives and methods in order to achieve similar ends as the Egyptian MB or did they break from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood purposefully with an idea of achieving different goals? If this

¹ Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86 (2007): 107.

proves not to be the case, did the environment within both Jordan and Syria engender, or by circumstance, demand the change? Analyzing how these groups react to different types of governments could highlight successful or faulty policies in dealing with Islamist groups as a whole.

Though the chosen groups all look to have had a similar starting point, they each do operate within different countries and under different types of governments. Even though the governments of the countries studied have similar sounding names, the manner by which each government operates is markedly different. Both Egypt and Syria are called Arab Republics, but both countries have authoritarian leaders who have broad powers when creating government policy. Jordan is not a republic, but rather is a Constitutional Monarchy. All three do share one common similarity in that each country is run by a dictatorial regime, but the manner in which these regimes hold onto power is different.

A possible way to better highlight the difference between Egypt and Syria, given that they are both described as Arab Republics, is a definition given by Clement Henry and Robert Springborg in their book *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*. The authors describe Syria as a ‘Bunker State’ and Egypt as a ‘Bully State’. A ‘Bunker State’ is described as being “...in a potential state of war with the societies they rule”.² In other words, the individuals who rule within these ‘Bunker States’ are small groups of individuals who have tribal or religious affiliations and rule over the population. The leaders have a tight control on most, if not all, aspects of life from directing the economy as they see fit, to controlling information flows in and out of the country. Because of this type of heavy handed rule the leaders have had to build a metaphorical ‘bunker’ to keep them safe from the populace.

Egypt is described with a similar type of term, the ‘Bully State’. This kind of state is similar to the ‘Bunker State’ but, as the name implies, is not as directly repressive as the ‘Bunker States’. Whereas the ‘Bunker States’ are ruled by a small minority the ‘Bully States’ are “...at once both more narrowly and broadly based. Their rule rests almost

² Clement M. Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 100.

exclusively on the institutional power of the military/security/party apparatus, but because these elites are not drawn from a clearly defined social formation, they are at least not unrepresentative of their relatively homogenous political communities”.³ Though there are different terms describing Syria and Egypt one might think that they are fundamentally different but the difference is more a difference in degree rather than in kind. The political power within Egypt is surely diffused among a larger number of people but the state is, like the ‘Bunker States’, very controlling of its population via large numbers of secret police and the lax application of legal protections when it comes to any perceived enemy of the government.

Unlike Egypt and Syria, Jordan is a Constitutional Monarchy whose official name is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It officially became the Kingdom of Jordan in 1949, but prior to this date, it was never a separate and standalone entity.⁴ After WWI, the process to make Jordan an independent nation began, and with the considerable capacity of the nation’s two leaders, Churchill and Abdullah, and aid from the United Nations, the undertaking was successful. The lasting effect of the British involvement, which was not all always impartial,⁵ would remain and become a lasting political issue for years to come.

In addition to examining the effect of governmental policies and attitudes on the *modus operandi* of these Islamist groups, this thesis will also look at how Islamic groups are affected by outside cultural influences and how the perception of these influences are handled or used by the groups. There seems to be, at the very least, an underlying importance placed on these forces based on the fact that outside cultural influences have been given as one of the causes for the rising of militant Islamist groups in the 1980s.⁶

³ Clement M. Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 134.

⁴ Aqil Hyder Hasan Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965) 1.

⁵ Abidi, 12.

⁶ Mary-Jane Deeb, “Militant Islam and the Politics of Redemption,” *The Annals of the American Academy* 524 (1992): 54.

To clarify, three forces in regards to Islamist group behavior are analyzed. The first, governmental policies or actions toward Islamist groups within the government's sphere of influence will be studied to understand to what extent these policies, and the corresponding political environment, have influenced how these groups operate and their use/disuse of violence. Secondly, cultural influences (to include national demographics) are studied to understand how these forces embolden or truncate operational methods used by the MB. And finally, a comparison of the groups themselves will be made to understand how, or if, they are different due to the environment that they matured in. These two factors will all be preceded by the history of each of these groups. This will be necessary to understand how the groups were created, the methods they used initially and whether outside cultural influences had any role in either one.

B. IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The need to study Islamist groups and the approaches they use to realize their objectives, everything from using violence to pursuing political power via legal means, is ever growing. This is demonstrated by the fact that Islamist groups “are broadly gaining strength across the Muslim world”⁷ and certainly in no threat of quietly disappearing over the horizon. The growth and empowerment of any such group or organization within such an important region of the world can never be examined too much.

The importance of such a conceivably powerful force gaining a larger hold in the Middle East by way of success in the political realm has tremendous implications for US foreign policy. As religious sentiment has grown in the Middle East over the past decades so has the number of religious oriented groups who have a strong influence on the political landscape. The consequences of serious trouble within the region will stretch well beyond its immediate borders and eventually most, if not all, nations would be affected. The affects will be felt worldwide due to the part that oil plays on the world stage.

⁷ OxResearch, Oxford: May 16, 2008 1.

The three groups that will be researched in this thesis are not counted among the more militant, violent Islamist groups. Though these groups do not now use violence, they each, with the exception of Jordan, have a sordid past when it comes to using violence to achieve their political ends. The groups within Syria and Egypt have a common trait in that their associations have spawned leaders of splinter groups that have sprung from the MB membership and these groups have relied on violence as a means of inciting change. The splinter groups have been responsible for the assassinations of many people, even heads of state. It seems that this fact alone would warrant a deeper study of any such groups.

Studying these organizations from this angle may uncover or clarify insight into how Islamist groups respond to certain methods used by the government to contain them. Another important aspect is distinguishing how different types of governments deal with Islamist groups within their area of control. This history may also give an indication of which types of policies would be more successful in strongly marginalizing violent or militant Islamist groups, or successfully convincing these groups to back away from the use of violence and join in the political process. Also, the data culled from such a study need not apply simply to Islamist groups but could possibly be of help in managing other, more militant, types of entities in other parts of the world.

Another possible outcome of such a study could open doors of understanding that were previously unknown. Any such understanding arrived at would likely have a calming effect on the approach eventually undertaken when addressing similar problems when dealing with likeminded groups when attempting to craft policy. Awareness of the likely motivations and actions of all parties involved could go a long way in ensuring that correct and effective steps are separated from ill-conceived, knee-jerk emotional responses which would bring about only a deepening of any problem. And a study of the histories of these groups would go a long way in uncovering the motivations that drive their actions.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The canon of literature dedicated to the Muslim Brotherhood is very broad. With the exception of the MB in Syria finding information on the MB is relatively easy to locate. Running through much of this literature is a debate over who the MB actually are. Some claim that the MB has put aside the use of violence as a means to achieve their ends while others yet contest that the group has simply put the use of violence temporarily aside and will use it again when it suits their purposes.

The breadth of literature that will be used to formulate this thesis will be drawn from two main sources. First, and primarily, I use books that have been published describing the MB as an international organization as well as books written on each individual group. The need of a detailed history of each group will be essential to understanding how, or if, each group has changed over time. Additionally, books that describe some of the general history of the Middle East region, its people and its culture will be referenced to obtain some historical insight into why such groups even exist.

A History of the Arab Peoples by Albert Hourani is a book that will serve many purposes in the writing of this thesis. Hourani begins the book before the time of the appearance of Muhammad, and writes of significant events all the way up to the late 1960s. He is very precise in covering such diverse cultural subjects as the role of early Islam, the formation of early Islamic societies and the importance of agriculture all the way to the politics that led to the rise of Arab Nationalism. The book is awash in cultural knowledge which helps inform insight as to why certain things evolved historically as they did. Not only does Hourani's writing help one understand current issues from a historical perspective, it can also serve to aid in indicating a possible direction for current movements.

Depth of detail is one of Hourani's fortes. He spares no effort to ensure that the reader understands the historical roots of a given subject. No subject is too small, if it will aid in the understanding of the reader. Hourani goes into fine detail from a subject as all

encompassing as Islam to a seemingly small subject like poetry. He describes how truly important poetry is in the Muslim world, not only to the people themselves, but to their common tongue.

A book that will be important in studying the MB in Jordan is *The Management of Islamic Activism* by Quintan Wiktorowicz. The author has done extensive field work in Jordan in trying to compare two different types of Islamic groups. One group is the more 'formal' of the two called Social Movement Organizations (SMO). These groups are the ones that the ruling regime encourages to organize that, in turn, operate under a set of rules that the regime creates. This, in effect, keeps these organizations within artificial lines dictated by the rulers so as to make sure they do not ever become too strong, and possibly challenge the ruling establishment. The second group studied is an informal group that does not, per se, organize in any specific way, but operates via informal social networks such as personal relationships or meetings in private homes. Wiktorowicz goes on to define the "manipulation of the bureaucracy to support state interests and priorities as the 'management of collective action'".

This management of collective action is the way that the ruling regime controls which type of groups form and which do not. The author points out the fact that the more overt forms of control have been put aside so a more subtle means of control needed to be created. This control comes through the state writing the rules that govern the creation of societal organizations in such a way as to only benefit the state. From the outside this may seem like an ineffective barrier that can be easily avoided, but when the state dictates all the ways in which a group can legally organize, the state's rules must be followed.

Another book that will be drawn on is a compilation of essays titled *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* by Marsha Posusney and Michele Angrist. The book is a collection of essays on subjects that range from the lack of democracy in the Middle East to cultural and, of course, political topics. The essays not only address all of the major players in the Middle East region, the most powerful countries, that is, but it also has more than a few that address the impact U.S. foreign policy in the area as regards its relationship with Israel.

It also addresses the MB in each of the three countries that are studied in this thesis. This book gives a good account of how dictatorial governments in the region have managed to stay in power while so many others are crumbling in other parts of the world.⁸ The chief source of information that will be gleaned from this book will be the understanding of the Islamist/government relationship from the government point of view. The book describes, very adeptly, the tools which dictatorial regimes use so efficiently to stifle opposition. As an example, one of the essays describes three specific historic events that had the possibility of undermining or even overthrowing the ruling government. The author then goes on to describe how the governments reacted to suppress the current, as well as any future, threat.

The book *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* by R. Hrair Dekmejian draws on history to explain the creation of Islamist groups. Dekmejian breaks the book down into three distinct parts. The first is what are the causes or ‘catalysts’ for the rise in Islamic fundamentalism. He finds that the rise of religious movements has its roots embedded in times of crisis, and that these movements are cyclical in nature. The second part of the book consists of case studies of each country where these movements have taken place. These case studies include the countries of Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The third section of the book theorizes about the future of Islamism.

Islam in Revolution characterizes the process of how Islamism began to take shape and gain strength if somewhat hypothetical in its conclusions. Dekmejian, highlights not only the historical context in which the Islamist groups built their foundations of thought, but also describes the mindset of the people under colonial rule and how these two things were integral in the creation of the Islamist groups.⁹ Dekmejian begins the book with the history of the Middle East but then moves backwards, one might say, to address many of the fundamentals on the subject matter. He goes so far as to define something as basic as Islamic group names and what they mean to the

⁸ Jason Brownlee, “Political Crisis and Restabilization: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia” in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, ed. Marsha Posusney and Michele Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 43.

⁹ R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 18.

psychological and social mindset of Islamic society. Its section on Islamism and the MB in Syria is very helpful due to the scarcity of obtainable historical data on the MB in Syria.

The fact that the MB has been virtually stopped in its tracks due to its destruction in the city of Hama as a viable political force within Syria since 1982, means that information written on the Syrian MB from that time forward is scarce. Due to this circumstance, and the rarity of up-to-date books on the matter, this thesis will rely on mostly journal articles as sources. What the articles lack in historical data and describing central ideological themes, will be covered by the few books on the subject. Many of these books were written in the years just before or after the MB's defeat at Hama.

The Islamic Struggle in Syria by Dr. Umar F. Abd-allah is a very credible source. The book was written in 1981, so events that occurred in the city of Hama, which neutralized the MB as a potent political force within Syria, happened after the fact. To address this deficit Dr. Abd-allah wrote a post-script describing the entire episode as an addendum to the original text. The book was published in 1983, so its representation of the facts surrounding the happenings in Hama is untarnished by the passing of time. The book itself takes great care in describing Syria in all of its complexities.

A newer book that is relied upon heavily will be *The Many Faces of Political Islam* by Mohammed Ayoob. The book tackles the sticky subject of religion and politics and how they bleed into one another in the Muslim world. He too starts out defining basic terms and ideas for the layman reader. He divides up each major player in the region and defines how they operate and what their stated objectives are. He also describes the political systems in each Muslim country as they are currently constructed, and then describes what facet of these types of governments that are declared as illegitimate by some of the Islamist, which they see are a reason to undermine them.

Ayoob describes what he calls the "multiple voices" in the Islamic community and their beliefs. This description runs the gamut of Islamic groups from the militant, like al-Qaeda, and the non-militant like the Muslim Brotherhood. He explains that basically

most of these voices claim to be speaking for the entire Islamic community, but in reality the community is too big and too diverse for just one voice to be loud enough to speak for all.

The book is thorough, not only in its recounting of the history of some of the most influential groups, but also in its description of where their tactics have failed or succeeded. The author also provides detail of how nationalist movements are affecting their own countries, and does a good job of making it a point to separate the transnational and national Islamist groups. The book proved to be utterly indispensable, not only in the factual data that it provides, but also in pointing out direction of where to look for further information on the subject.

D. AUTHOR'S ARGUMENT ON THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The attempt of this thesis is not to uncover some previously undervalued evidence by which to create a new paradigm for dealing with Islamist groups. It aims to dissect the available data in an attempt to understand who these groups are, as well as, how their operational behavior can be, and has been, affected. As regards the current disagreement within the scholarly literature as to the true nature of the MB, one side seems more plausible than the other. The reality that seems more likely, to this author at least, is that the MB is not truly adverse to using violence if they believe that its employment would be successful.

The MB's past behavior has been, if nothing else, very pragmatic in choosing methods that they deem likely to succeed. Their history is rife with examples of the group abruptly changing course and becoming involved in processes they had once deemed unworthy of their time. One example that springs to mind is becoming involved in elections. Fundamentally, with the same ease that the MB renounced violence they could as easily create another precept by which they could justify its reuse as a legitimate tool of change. Having this belief displays the need for the study that follows to expose the facts and understand the forces that influence any change in group behavior.

Undoubtedly, there are many forces that ultimately affect the means any Islamist group decides to employ to achieve its agenda. Likely some of the strongest influences on these decisions will be the pressure applied against these groups by government and, possibly no less so, the cultural and demographic environment that exists in the country of operation.

E. METHOD AND STRUCTURE

Data will be gathered and examined in an attempt to answer the question of how an Islamist group's behavior is affected, by governmental policies and cultural stimuli, in the country within which that group operates. Specifically, to what degree do the political atmosphere and the cultural dynamics determine the actions, to include the use or renunciation of violence, of Islamists groups that share a common starting point? A detailed inquiry into these Islamist groups is necessary to summarize not only an historical narrative, but also to construct a transparent and understandable model by which one can see how these groups have changed over the years since the shift in the international environment with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and what forces dictated these changes.

Though there has been much written about both the rise in Islamism and many of the Islamist groups themselves, a problem with having enough information may still exist, specifically in the case of Syria. Luckily, there have been reams of information written about the MB outside of Syria, so the facts that surround it as a group should not be hard to pin down. The bulk of the problem will lie with gathering information on the Syrian MB. There was a good deal written about the Syrian MB during its heyday of the 1960s and 1970s but very little has been written since the Syrian MB met their demise in the city of Hama after the defeat handed to them by the forces of Hafiz al-Asad. Even the information that was written during the 1970s will be difficult to locate given that much of it was written in article form for journals that have not been in publication for some time.

Another possible problem is attempting to connect the actions used by the governments against the Islamist groups to any specific response by the groups. In other words, how can one define, simply from the actions of an Islamist group, something as a reaction to specific maneuvers by a regime to isolate the group? This is, of course, in lieu of any specific declaration by the group(s) defining their behavior as such. One would think that, if after allowing Islamist groups to participate in the political process, all violent actions against the government ceased, then it was the allowance of participation that led to the cessation of violence. But that may not be the case at all for there were times when the MB was allowed to take part in elections, indirectly, in Egypt and members of the group broke off and used violence, despite the allowance of political participation. The difficulty lies in identifying the actual point where these groups give up all hope and turn to violence. The literature may, in fact, demonstrate this in something as specific as the group's stating its reason for a change of tactic, or be so obvious in the concomitant political environment as to amount to a foregone conclusion.

The structure of this thesis will be straightforward and linear in its presentation. The first chapters will detail the history of the beginnings of each of the groups studied. This history will run roughly from its ideological roots and their progenitors, to how the group was actually formed. The rather important aspect of these groups' history with the ruling regimes of each country will also be elaborated on.

After the historical facts have been established, the current rapport between the groups and the governments of the countries within which they operate will be discussed. This is a necessary step needed to be able to assess the changes, if any, in behavior of both the governments in regards to the Islamist groups, as well as the groups themselves. If any changes in behavior are to be made, then the beginnings and the current situation both have to be assessed.

Next, the methods, both historical and modern, that have been used by the governments in dealing with these usually unwelcome entities will be investigated. This information will show not only what methods have had success or failure, but it will also provide an understanding of which type of methods are favored by which type of government. It can also show, depending on the methods used, what the group's

responses were or are likely to be given different circumstances. Lastly, there will be a comparison between the studied groups to try and flesh out the environment within which these groups matured and its influence on the overall character of each group.

II. THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

A. HISTORY

The creation of the Muslim Brotherhood was not a social movement that simply sprung up overnight as some novel idea to address centuries old social problems. In fact, there had been similar organizations within the Muslim world for many generations that had traditionally organized around groups of individuals that had common ties, such as occupations;¹⁰ which were organized similar to the guilds of Western Europe.¹¹ These organizations were called *jam'iyah*, or societies. Historically, the earlier *jam'iyah* were created by Christian missionaries and structured along the same lines as the European model. The main purpose for creating these groups was to try and promulgate Western ideas with the objective of growing “western cultural patterns in the Arab world”.¹²

The year 1928 saw the creation of the Society of Muslim Brothers, which soon became known by its more common name, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).¹³ The group was begun by a twenty-two year old man named Hasan al-Banna. Al-Banna was dismayed by foreign influence within Egypt, which he viewed as a disease that would eventually sicken and kill Egyptian society. This foreign influence, as he saw it, was leading Egyptians astray and away from Islamic principles.

In response to his belief in the encroaching social decay brought about by foreign influence, and the Egyptian social elites that constantly abused their political advantages, al-Banna started the MB. Initially, the MB was an Islamic reform movement which targeted individuals and their personal behavior; but it soon grew into an apparatus with the strength to challenge the ‘secular leadership’ in the Muslim societies.¹⁴ One of the factors that fertilized the ground from which grew the MB, had been around since the late

¹⁰ Umar F. Abd-allah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria* (Berkely: Mizan Press, 1983), 88.

¹¹ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 220.

¹² Abd-allah, 88-89.

¹³ Adrienne L. Edgar, “The Islamic Opposition in Egypt and Syrian: A Comparative Study,” *Journal of Arab Affairs* 6 (1987): 3.

¹⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 4.

19th century. This factor was the leaders of Egypt during the late 19th and early 20th century who were completely incapable, even unwilling, to end the British occupation of the country which had led to widespread discontent.¹⁵

The main focus of the early MB centered on aiding the community via charitable programs and social work. The organization grew rapidly and quickly, gained many adherents during the 1930s, and had 500 branches and tens of thousands of members by the decade's end.¹⁶ Much of the group's growth and popularity was due to its social programs, which were successful largely because of their efficient organization. As the MB grew stronger, al-Banna began to press the importance of political action as a way to strengthen the community as a whole. Given that the Brotherhood started as a grass roots organization, aided those in need, and practiced what they preached, the group gained solid and loyal support from most sections of the population. Because of this genuine support by a population which was usually brushed aside by the Egyptian leaders, al-Banna's call for political action did not fall on deaf ears.

Understanding that the MB was growing too strong to easily control, and fearing that a revolution was imminent because of the Brotherhood's involvement in street violence and assassinations,¹⁷ the Egyptian government dissolved the group in 1948. This direct action by the government against the MB instigated a wave of violence between the Brotherhood and the government, which culminated in the assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister, Mahmud Fahmi an-Nukrashi. A few weeks later, in retaliation for the death of the Prime Minister, al-Banna himself was assassinated by agents that were believed to be part of the Egyptian government.

Four years later, in 1952, the fortunes of the Brotherhood changed with the revolution in Egypt and the setting up of General Muhammad Naguib as President. Naguib was given the position as President by Gamal Nasser and his Free Officer

¹⁵ Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 65.

¹⁶ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 199.

¹⁷ Dekmejian, 76.

movement who won the revolution with no active aid from the MB.¹⁸ During the first year after the revolution the relationship between the new government and the MB could almost be described as friendly. By 1954, Nasser was at the head of the Egyptian government and the MB realized that his regime was going to build a secular government, so they supported his political enemies. By April of 1954, Nasser had consolidated his power, and some months later he began suppressing the Brotherhood. This repression, which saw large numbers of MB members filling Egyptian jails, lasted, in large or small degree, until the death of Nasser in 1970.

In that same year, Anwar Sadat became president of Egypt. Sadat soon began making broad changes in the political fabric of Egypt and initiated the process of “de-Nasserization.”¹⁹ This process was designed to remake all things ‘Nasser’ which included ousting many of his strong political allies and allowing opposition political parties to form, which had been outlawed by the Nasser regime, in order to counterbalance the leftist Nasserist parties still operating within the country. This new political freedom allowed the MB to emerge back out into the open, though they had not formally been legalized. Sadat’s desire to move away from the Nasserist policies of the past and cut Egypt’s ties with the Soviet Union did not meet with approval from all segments of society.

In 1972-73, university students protested these new changes and Sadat, looking for a way to circumvent the students, encouraged the creation of Islamic societies that would instinctively counter the leftist parties which were the driving force behind the student uprisings. His plan worked very well and soon the Islamic groups thrived and deeply weakened the leftist groups that were so powerful under Nasser. The success of the 1973 war raised Sadat’s popularity as well as helped to legitimize his use of Islamic themes in politics. At the same time Sadat also let many MB members out of jail and even allowed them to republish two of their more popular religious papers, though they still had not been officially legalized.

¹⁸ Dekmejian, 77.

¹⁹ Edgar, 3.

But again, by the late 1970s, the strained relationship between the MB and the Egyptian president shifted to one of confrontation. Disagreement with the many policies that were being proposed and implemented by Sadat saw even the Islamic groups at the universities, which Sadat helped to create, slowly turn against him. Because of the increased tension within the country and many individual's impatience with the MB's gradualist approach at obtaining full state power, militant Islamist groups began to appear on the scene. In an attempt to try and placate some of these Islamist groups that were quickly gaining members, Sadat's government implemented Shari'a as the source of all legislation. Despite Sadat's attempt to paint himself as being a legitimate Muslim ruler he was assassinated in October of 1981 bringing Husni Mubarak into power.

B. IDEOLOGY

Though it is true that the MB started out principally as an organization that concerned itself only with societal problems which they tackled through their charitable organizations, they soon became aware of the political capital they were amassing. The organization did not, and has not, stopped their social outreach programs, but they have shifted focus onto affecting politics within Egypt to a view of changing society more completely. Al-Banna believed that "the social and political regeneration of Egypt was intimately tied to the restoration of Islam as a guiding force in national life".²⁰ The main objective of the MB under al-Banna was the creation of a true Islamic state, which he envisioned as having "existed in the past, at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the rightly guided Caliphs."²¹

With this thought in mind, this is a good place to set out the following foundational beliefs of the MB.

- The creation of an Islamic state as defined by the implementation of the Sharia. Al-Banna believed that a state either was, or was not, a true Islamic nation based on this fact alone. A nation that did not follow Shari'a as its guiding principle in the leading of the nation could not be a true Islamic state.

²⁰ Cleveland, 199.

²¹ Ayoub 199.

- The Quran would be the constitution of the true Islamic state
- The ruler must be bound by the teachings of Islam. Al-Banna expounded on this last point by creating a connection, albeit tenuous, to a democratic form of government under such a ruler. He depicted the ruler and the populace as having a “social contract” where the ruler is the “agent” that represents the people. Since the “agent” was contracted by the people he is “elected” by them.²² This, in fact, does not actually designate what specific type of government such a nation should have, but it does seem to infer the elimination some of the harsher forms of dictatorial possibilities where rulers push their countrymen down with their power rather than lift them up.

Though the Brotherhood does believe in the creation of an Islamic state, this belief does not encompass the demand that the type of government that would eventually be set up, would be the type that existed during the time of the Prophet. Al-Banna believed that the Quran and the Sunna were all that was needed to form an authentic state, to the exclusion of all post Quran/Sunna intervening creations to include the Islamic jurisprudential traditions. The exclusion of Islamic jurisprudence is built in the idea that this tradition is not adequate to deal with modern day problems and a return to the original sources of Islam, the Quran and the Sunna, would be enough because these alone contain authority enough to address any modern day issues that may appear. This idea of using the Quran and the Sunna alone as the basis to lead an Islamic society is not specific to the MB alone, but is common to many Islamist groups.²³

After the death of Hasan al-Banna in 1948, the Brotherhood was thrown into disarray, hunted by the state, and quickly outlawed. The chaos that reigned had the affect of breaking the organization into different factions with each faction espousing very dissimilar views and tactics. The years leading up to the revolution of 1952 in Egypt, which saw the overthrowing of King Farouq, were a trying period for the MB. The assassination of al-Banna left a great void in the Brotherhood, leaving it without a strong and charismatic leader, or an ideologue to which they could address problems. The weakening of the MB during these years was caused, in part, by the breaking off of militant splinter groups from the original conservative base. This, in effect, created

²² Ayoob, 71.

²³ Ibid., 72.

opposing groups with one side wanting to continue with the “theory of religious revival,”²⁴ and the other side wanting to respond to the political oppression that it was suffering under from the regime. Eventually, the role of ideologue was filled by Sayyid Qutb. The ideas formulated by Qutb during the 1950s and 1960s, would become instrumental in the Brotherhood for years to come as well as act as the main driving force behind many future militant groups.

Sayyid Qutb was born in the Egyptian town of Asyut and it was said that he had memorized the Quran while still a child. As an adult, he was an author and a teacher and had received a Western education at the University of Cairo. After graduating from the university, Qutb spent two years in the United States studying its education system. It was during his time in America that his first major work of religious and social criticism was published. As the years passed it became widely known that Qutb had become the main ideologue for the Brotherhood. The attempted assassination of Nasser in 1954 saw many members of the MB thrown into jail, Qutb among them due to his standing in the movement.

Qutb wrote a work called *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Signposts on the Road) while in prison. Among other things, this piece stated that the prime function of any government was to enforce God's law (Shari'a) and all Muslims under the control of that government were required to obey it. But the contrary was also true of any government that did not uphold God's law and any Muslim under this government's jurisdiction had a responsibility to disobey it. The type of government that did not uphold God's law was defined as *jahiliyyah*, ignorant of Islam.²⁵ This was not the only theme that Qutb addressed in his body of work; he also expanded on the ideas of *takfir* and *jihad*.

The wave of nationalism that was swept the Arab world during the 1950s helped disseminate Qutb's philosophical views. In fact, he recognized the power that Nationalism possessed and he called nationalism a creed and, in an effort to harness the internal power of the nationalistic feeling, identified Islam as the nationality of all

²⁴ Mark Huband, *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder: Westview Press, 2006), 226.

²⁵ Cleveland, 447.

Muslims.²⁶ Although Qutb names Islam as the nationality of all Muslims he disagreed with secular nationalism because it entailed division between peoples that created “bitterness and hatred.”²⁷ At around the same period there were other seminal events that aided in Qutb’s ideas, gaining traction among a large segment of the population, though only a relative few individuals actually created or joined militant Islamist groups. Events such as the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and the Arab’s defeat at the hands of the Israelis, all helped to exacerbate the communal feeling of “humiliation and disgrace”²⁸ that had been building in the Arab community since the days of colonialization.

One of the bedrock principles that Qutb expounded on, and one which other principles are in turn supported by, is that of *jahiliyyah*. This term refers to a specific time period, and therefore does not carry any implication of personal culpability within itself. The time referred to is the history of humankind before knowledge of Allah had come to man by way of the Prophet Muhammad. Qutb stated that all the Arab leaders, even those who claimed to be faithful Muslims, were not true Muslims but had left true Islam to practice worldly philosophies that were based upon man-made principles. He even went as far as to say that what was understood as true Islam during his day, was also a product of *jahiliyyah*.²⁹ When the essence of *jahiliyyah* is fully developed, then that sets the stage for explaining the place of jihad in the true believer’s life. Since Qutb described the entire Arab world as under *jahiliyyah*, by default the rest of the world also was suffering under *jahiliyyah*, which then called for jihad. Qutb does not believe that jihad should be strictly defensive, but that it must also be offensive in order to bring Islam to the infidels of the world. In fact Qutb defines Jihad as a command to “extend Islam to the ends of the

²⁶ Sayed Khatab, “Arabism and Islamism in Sayyid Qutb’s Thought on Nationalism” *The Muslim World*, 94 (2004): 221.

²⁷ Ibid., 222.

²⁸ R. Scott Appleby, “History in the Fundamentalist Imagination”, *The Journal of American History*, 89 (2002): 507.

²⁹ Appleby, 507.

earth”.³⁰ Much of the reasoning used by Qutb to validate some of his conclusions bears a striking resemblance to another western political theorist who also had great skill at spinning historical facts with which to create specious conclusions;-Karl Marx.

With his interpretations of such basic beliefs, Qutb knew that he was breaking with much of the historical interpretation of these same ideas. So, in order for him to circumvent the objections he knew were to be raised about his permitting the use of violence against other Muslims, he tackled the concept of *takfir*. In effect, Qutb took the concept and used it as a tool by which to pursue jihad against Muslim governments. Qutb was taking a page out of the book of an older sect of Islam, the Kharijites. These were a group of people who saw only themselves as true believers and attacked anyone who did not agree with their beliefs.³¹ Qutb interpreted *takfir* in a similar way to use it to give validity to his denunciation and call to overthrow the Muslim rulers. Only through the defining of *takfir* in this way could Qutb hope to convince others to use jihad against Muslim rulers. As one can imagine, there were people who embraced Qutb’s writings and used his works as platforms of an ideology upon which they formed militant Islamist organizations. Two such groups were the *al-Takfir* group and the al-Jihad group; ultimately it was members from the al-Jihad group that assassinated Sadat in 1981.

From as early as 1969, the Brotherhood began repudiating some of the more radical ideas of Qutb through their new leader Hasan al-Hudaybi. Hudaybi believed that the duty of Muslims was to preach Islam within the society they lived in, and he disagreed with the idea of *jahiliyya* stating that disobedient Muslims were simply sinners that could be brought back into the fold.³² This started the MB on the path of formally renouncing radical views that almost always led to violent action.

The history of the Egyptian MB recounted here serves to give an idea of the political landscape in which the MB was initially formed. It demonstrates the influence that the internal cultural dynamics, such as the disparity between the classes, had on its

³⁰ Appelby., 508.

³¹ Ayoob, 30.

³² Ayoob, 80.

formation as well as the pressures created by the presence of the colonial powers. Another informative section is the history of the MB's shift in ideology with the introduction of the ideas formulated by Sayyid Qutb. The atmosphere created by the subjugation of the MB by the Egyptian state was instrumental in the acceptance of Qutb's ideas by a portion of the MB. While it is true that the entire organization did not accept Qutb's ideas, nonetheless, the easily accepted change in ideology by many members seems to lend credence to the future possibility of the group excusing the use of violence if a favorable environment is created.

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III. MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN SYRIA

A. HISTORY

The country of Syria is made up of a mosaic of numerous ethnicities and sectarian divides that have caused tension within the country, even before it was officially recognized as a nation-state in 1946. In fact, these ethnic and sectarian differences have been a tremendous source of tension for centuries.³³ With the population of a country whose history is strewn with the rubble of confrontation along identity lines, any Islamist group looking for a base of support within such a populace would find the undertaking somewhat taxing.

The history of the MB within the country starts before the setting of the boundaries which have served to create the modern day Syrian nation. During the 1930s, some Syrian students, upon returning home after studying in Egypt, carried into Syria some of the Salafist ideas that were being propagated by Hasan al-Banna.³⁴ These ideas took some time to spread, but eventually the Syrian MB was created in 1945 under the guidance of a friend of Hasan al-Banna, a man named Dr. Mustafa as-Siba'i. Unlike the Egyptian MB, the Syrian MB was formed over a period of months per the direction of Siba'i. During this time period, Syria already had a number of Islamic *jam'iyah* (societies) which Siba'i eventually brought together under the MB banner. Among the groups that were incorporated in the Syrian MB, was a group called the Youth of Muhammad, which was started by Siba'i in 1941.

Mustafa as-Siba'i was born in 1915 in the city of Hims to a family that was somewhat of a contradiction. The family produced well-known Islamic leaders that possessed such skills at oratory, that they led Friday prayers at local mosques, as well as individuals that became leaders in the Syrian Communist movement. Siba'i became politically active as a young teenager and, from that time on throughout the rest of his life, was continually in and out of prison because of this political activism. At 18, Siba'i

³³ Flynt Leverett, *Inheriting Syria: Basher's Trial by Fire*, (Washington D.C.:Brookings Institution Press, 205), 2.

³⁴ Ibid., 217.

went to Cairo to further his education and met Hasan al-Banna, the two becoming fast friends. While in Egypt Siba'i was very active within the MB and, via this experience, learned the manner in which one runs a politically active, Islamic minded, group.³⁵

At this time both the Egyptian and Syrian MB groups were similar in some ways, such as organizationally, but they were each independent of the other. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Egyptian MB was a stronger organization partly due to its maturity, but after Nasser almost crushed the MB in 1954, the Syrian MB moved to the fore and became the principle representative for the MB in the Arab world.³⁶ Though the Syrian MB could not be rightly called a copy of the Egyptian MB, they did have some basic things in common. Both organizations tried to affect many aspects of life, be these economic or social, and accordingly, they both created projects to aid their members ³⁷ and the society at large.

Above all, Siba'i could be characterized as a mover, that is, one who does not simply talk of change but actively pursues it. Ironically enough, his most productive years occurred after a stint in prison where he was tortured so extensively that his health never fully recovered. He vehemently disagreed with the notion that Muslims should take a quietist and separatist approach at solving society's problems. Though he disagreed deeply with the Sufi approach of separatism from society, he held Sufis in high regard because of their deeply held convictions. He believed that the main social objectives in Islam of progress, justice and the welfare of society could not be achieved without "consciousness, work and struggle."³⁸ Siba'i also stressed the absolute extreme importance of Muslim solidarity and emphasized the need of this reality through the emphasis on *tawhid*, the oneness of God. Essentially, Siba'i stated that the Syrian MB was not a political party or a *jam'iyah* of old but was instead a "spirit" that was to "permeate the Islamic community, it is a new revolution."³⁹

³⁵ Abd-allah, 96-99.

³⁶ Ibid., 91.

³⁷ Ibid., 91.

³⁸ Ibid., 95.

³⁹ Abd-allah, 93.

The year 1947 highlights a major difference between the early fortune of the Egyptian MB and its Syrian contemporary. In this year, the Syrian MB saw three of their candidates elected to the Syrian parliament although they did not run under the MB name. Instead these members ran under the name *Rabitat al-'ulama*, (The League of Muslim Clerics) which was “a legitimizing body formed by several Islamic associations in 1946 to support the Brotherhood’s bid for seats in parliament.”⁴⁰ The elections of these three individuals and the obvious sign of the growing strength of the Syrian MB that this event demonstrated looked to come to an abrupt end after the coup led by Colonel Husni al-Za’im in March of 1949.

Soon after taking power, the MB approved of this coup thinking that it would ultimately benefit their standing in Syria, Za’im outlawed the MB, and all other political parties, on his way to successfully alienating most members of society including his old allies.⁴¹ Ultimately, Za’im’s political aspirations were short-lived as he was overthrown late in 1949. Soon after this new coup, legal status was returned to the Syrian MB and they quickly formed the Islamist Socialist Front. The Islamic Socialist Front was a political party created by the Syrian MB as a tool to gain wider support from a broader base of the population. This objective can be seen in the party’s platform. The party calls for social equality, land reform and worker’s rights. It also has very little mention of Islam or religion in general with the small exception of a need to teach people about God.⁴² This was mainly due to the presence, and strength of, other religions in the country.

This type of political participation enjoyed by the Syrian MB was not so easily obtained by the Egyptian MB. In fact, it was not until the late 1970s that opposition parties were to seriously challenge twenty-four years of single party rule.⁴³ Though

⁴⁰ Joshua Teitelbaum, “The Muslim Brotherhood and the ‘Struggle for Syria’, 1947-1958 Between Accommodation and Ideology,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40 (2004): 137.

⁴¹ Ibid., 140-149.

⁴² Teitelbaum, 140.

⁴³ Vickie Langohr, “Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics? Egypt and Other Liberalizing Arab Regimes” in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, ed Marsha Pripstein and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Reinner, 2005), 199.

opposing political parties had in fact existed in Egypt before this time, they were never powerful and always had to ally themselves into fragile coalitions to win seats in government. The Egyptian MB, even at this late date, was not allowed to run for election as MB members, but could run as independents. The 1980s witnessed a significant number of MB members within opposing political parties gain significant political ground by winning many elected positions, which allowed these parties to propose 22 percent of all legislation in 1984.⁴⁴ The fact that the Syrian MB was involved directly within the political process only a few years after its formation highlights at least one major difference between the political environments that existed between Egypt and Syria at that time.

In the early 1950s, things began to truly take a turn for the worse for the Syrian MB. In November 1951, the government of Hasan al-Hakim fell, and after casting around for a suitable replacement for the presidency, the former Minister of the Economy, Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi, was chosen. Dawalibi had a long history in Syrian politics and had held many elected positions due to the support not only of his own party, the People's Party, but also because of support lent to him by the MB. The choice of Dawalibi appeared to put a strong ally of the MB in the highest seat of government. In the past Dawalibi had taken part in mass anti-west demonstrations orchestrated by the Islamic Socialist Front, which was a political party created by the Syrian MB. Dawalibi had also been supported outright by the Brotherhood for elections in his hometown of Aleppo.⁴⁵

The coup occurred on November 29 and was led by Colonel Fawzi Salu. Through some strong arm tactics, Salu was able to force Dawalibi to resign so as to give his leadership at least a veneer of legitimacy. This change of the guard eventually led to the outlawing of the MB in January of 1952. The new government not only outlawed the Brotherhood (and other political parties), but it also began the process of totally secularizing society. From this point on, there were a number of coups and changes of the head of the Syrian government. During these turbulent years of unsteady government, the

⁴⁴ Vickie Langohr, "Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics? Egypt and Other Liberalizing Arab Regimes" in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, ed Marsha Pripstein and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 199.

⁴⁵ Teitelbaum, 145-150.

Syrian MB decided to back away from politics though there were still MB members holding elected seats that had run as independents. Instead of direct involvement in politics, the MB said that it would throw its support behind strong Muslim candidates and even went so far as to demand that any MB member who ran for parliament had to first resign from the Brotherhood.⁴⁶ During the first few years of the 1960s, the Brotherhood was again allowed to legally join the political arena, which it did and won ten seats in parliament. But this window was soon slammed shut as the group was again declared illegal in 1964.

That same year saw the new Brotherhood leader of three years, Isam al-Attar, exiled after the Ba'th party again took power following another coup. Al-Attar was able to run the MB from exile until 1969 when he was then removed from power.⁴⁷ After the loss of the 1967 war with Israel, and the growing discontent the Arab people felt towards their governments because of this loss, another leader came to the forefront of the Islamist movement. This man's name was Marwan Hadid. Hadid came from the ranks of the Syrian MB and was, like Siba'i with al-Banna, a good friend to Sayyid Qutb whom he met while studying in Egypt.

While in Egypt, Hadid heard and accepted the teachings of Qutb, and upon return to Syria, started his own militant Islamist group. Though Hadid was once a part of the Syrian MB the group itself never endorsed or supported Hadid's methods; he called for direct armed confrontation with the Syrian regime,⁴⁸ while the Brotherhood did not. It took some time for Hadid to gather enough followers to create his group, the 'Fighting Vanguard',⁴⁹ though it never commanded large numbers of followers. It could never properly be called anything more than a "fringe movement on the periphery of the Brotherhood."⁵⁰ Like their Egyptian counterparts, the Syrian MB under Attar endorsed a

⁴⁶ Teitelbaum, 151.

⁴⁷ Abd-allah, 101.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁹ BBC Worldwide Monitoring, "Syria's Muslim Brotherhood," April 5, 2007, BBC Monitoring News.

⁵⁰ Abd-allah, 105.

gradual approach to change. Hadid's group, when it finally gathered enough members to carry out missions, demonstrated its militant intent in an unquestionable manner by their policy of targeted assassinations of important members within the regime.

Despite early and prolonged success in politics, the Syrian branch of the MB was to suffer such a defeat that would, by comparison, minimize any setback that the Egyptian MB had ever experienced. In 1980, the Syrian MB led demonstrations in many major Syrian cities that were aimed at criticizing the Asad government and its policies. These demonstrations led to heavy handed oppression as well as the massacre of Brotherhood members that were held in government prisons. The MB responded to these government massacres by trying to assassinate President Asad who, in turn, made membership in the Brotherhood punishable by death. Tension grew, as well as the violent campaign, between the MB and the government until 1982. Finally, in February of that same year, a revolt broke out in the city of Hama, a MB stronghold, which the Syrian government suppressed by shelling the town for three weeks. The whole affair climaxed when the army sent units into the city culminating with the deaths of an estimated 5,000-10,000 MB members.⁵¹ After the massacre in Hama the MB in Syria was affectively neutralized and the Islamic Socialist Front was forced to ally themselves with the Ba'th party.

B. IDEOLOGY

In comparison between the Syrian and Egyptian MB branches, the quantity written about the Egyptian MB amounts to a well constructed anthology as opposed to a badly edited pamphlet that holds information on the Syrian MB. This is the case for many reasons, not the least of which is that the MB is still a powerful political and social force within Egypt, while the influence that they have in Syria has been minimal since 1982. Given this reality, finding specifics about the ideological underpinnings of the Syrian branch, can be difficult to locate.

⁵¹ Michael Jacobson, "What Role for the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria's Future?" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 972 (2005): 1.

Both the Syrian and Egyptian MB were begun by men who knew each other and studied in Egypt. The man who started the Syrian MB was educated in Egypt and was a personal friend of one of the chief ideologues of the MB, so it stands to reason that the Syrian MB would be similar to its Egyptian counterpart in some basic ways; both groups having the same goal of trying to achieve social justice and solidarity. Where differences become clear, in the methods each used to achieve these goals; the constructing of these methods being influenced by the political environment of each country. During the 1930s and 40s, there were two forces that exerted a strong force on Syrian politics, the struggle for independence and the conflict between the new middle and lower middle classes and the semi feudal upper class.⁵² After independence was achieved in 1946, the latter of the two took center stage and it became very beneficial to the membership rolls of the new Syrian MB. The friction between these two classes also served to create a body politic to whom the MB message would enliven.

The notion of auto-generated action to achieve social and economic justice was the main crux of Siba'i's message. This is in keeping with his idea, stated earlier, that the Syrian MB movement was a revolution which in itself implies action on the part of its adherents. Siba'i was "fundamentally concerned with articulating Islam as a spirit that permeates the very being of the Islamic community"⁵³ and that it was neither communism, capitalism, nor any philosophical notions created by man, but was, instead, a third way. The MB was the herald that called all Muslims to action and only they (the MB) could achieve the justice that all Muslim's desired.

With this in mind here follow some of the specific ideological goals that were to be achieved under MB leadership:

- An end to the dependence upon foreign powers
- An end to the dominance of the upper class
- A limit on the amount of land an individual could own
- Free education for all
- Creation of a strong and independent economy

⁵² Abd-allah, 92.

⁵³ Ibid., 93.

- All influence by outside powers in internal Syrian affairs ended
- Endorsement of direct participatory democracy

According to Siba'i, only a system based upon Islam could achieve aims that had been so eagerly awaited. One of the unstated aims of Siba'i, but one of the most crucial, was his desire to demonstrate how Islam could indeed tackle and solve all of the societal problems that Syria was facing. All of the social programs that were set up by the Brotherhood – clinics, schools and the like – were set up to not only resolve immediate problems, but; more importantly, their success was meant to be demonstrated as irrefutable proof of the validity of Islam to the modern world.

Chief among the issues that are stressed by the Syrian MB is the issue of Palestine.⁵⁴ The lion's share of attention during Siba'i's lifetime was spent on addressing this very issue. Central to the solution of the Palestinian issue was, again, the central concept of involved action to solve the problem and not sit back and wait for self-serving politicians to fix the problem. The driving force behind any such action would have to be a deep conviction in Islamic principles because Siba'i knew that anything less would not have the power to push individuals to act in defiance of resistance.

During the years post WWII, the world was roughly divided into two camps; these camps were headed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Many of the Middle Eastern countries would appeal to one of these two Superpowers for protection against the other. After many years of unwanted colonialism one can see that for this region of the world the idea of allowing even outside pressure to influence domestic policy was not relished, to say the least. During a period of such uncertainty and outside pressure, Siba'i showed his political acumen by devising a way to humiliate the West while keeping the Soviet Bear at bay.

During the 1950s, the U.S. and Great Britain were trying to establish a system of allies inside the Middle East. Syria was aware of the West's intentions and used these efforts as fodder to give lip-service to a possible pact with the Soviet Union. Inside Syria, both the MB and the Communist party were vying for support from the same

⁵⁴ Abd-allah, 128.

constituency, the urban and lower-middle classes. The MB hated communism, but they knew that they had to tread lightly to not alienate possible future members. During this period, the Arab league focused on support from Western influence in the region, so Siba'i propagated this perception and used it as an excuse to declare the possibility of an alliance with the Soviet Union, while making it clear that accepting Communism was not a possibility.

Siba'i justified this conceivable alliance with the Soviet Union by implying that the Soviets were less guilty of creating problems in the region than the Western powers were. The unspoken reason for the guilt was understood by all, colonialism. The West's role in the creation of Israel and the claim that the West wanted to create American colonies in the Middle East were also used to stir up anti-Western resentment even further. All of these political machinations eventually led to the West easing up on their efforts to build allies in the region, while the MB, through some well placed articles in local newspapers stating Soviet culpability in the region, was successful in making the proposed alliance with the USSR a non-issue.⁵⁵

At this point Siba'i came up with a solution to the superpower question; neutrality for Syria between the U.S. and the USSR. The MB was, in fact, the first in the Arab world to develop the idea of neutrality.⁵⁶ The consequences following these political plays were three-fold and displayed the political brilliance possessed by Siba'i. First, the need of the Syrian government proper to treat with the Soviet Union and the West due to all of the anti-outsider feeling being fomented in the nation by the MB gave the Brotherhood more room to strengthen their political objectives. If the government was constantly running around putting out fires, they would have little time to meddle in Brotherhood affairs. Second, it kept the outside powers guessing as to which direction the political winds would finally end up blowing. And, finally, it created the space that Siba'i needed to display the Brotherhood's social and political successes to display their relevance in solving both domestic and supra-domestic problems. This episode also demonstrates the depth of commitment that the Brotherhood had to achieving its agenda.

⁵⁵ Teitelbaum, 144-147.

⁵⁶ Abd-allah, 128.

The ideals that motivate the members of the Brotherhood are painted with a broad brush in this section, but they suffice to give a general idea of the point of departure for the group's actions. The ultimate end of the MB in Syria could well be obtained by achieving these separate goals. This end, broadly speaking, is to create an Islamic political system that puts an end to "oppression, exploitation and moral decadence; it must establish justice, serve the people and God's creation, and guarantee each citizen the fulfillment of elemental needs: food, clothing, housing, medical care and education."⁵⁷

The facts in this section on the MB in Syria tend to lend weight to the profound affect that both demographics and government policy have on Islamist behavior. Demographically, Syria is not a monolith like Egypt so the MB, in choosing their *modus operandi*, had to take into account the variant ethnic groups within the country. It was necessary that they take these facts under consideration because they could not afford to alienate or make enemies of too many of the non-Sunni groups. If they did succeed in alienating these groups then the government possibly could have had a large number of willing accomplices to draw to its side in its eventual fight with the MB.

⁵⁷ Adb-allah, 145.

IV. THE JORDANIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

A. HISTORY

The relationship between the MB in Jordan and the Jordanian ruling monarchy represents a major departure from the reality described above as regards the relationship between the MB and the governments in Egypt and Syria. Whereas the interaction between the MB and the governments of Egypt and Syria can doubtlessly be defined as hostile, both historically and contemporarily, the situation in Jordan is the contrary. In its entire early history, the MB in Jordan has never tried to overthrow the ruling regime, used violence, or worked clandestinely. This could account for it becoming the largest and most powerful ‘organized social movement’ within the country.⁵⁸

The founder of the Brotherhood in Jordan was a man named Abdul Latif Abu Qura. In contradiction to Mustafa as-Siba’i, who started the MB chapter in Syria and was a personal friend of Hasan al-Banna; Abu Qura was a close and personal friend of the King of Jordan, Abdullah I. King Abdullah believed wholeheartedly in what the Brotherhood professed. He proved this belief by appointing the movement’s secretary, Abdul Hakim Adin, to his cabinet and was quoted as saying, “Jordan is in need of the Brotherhood’s efforts.”⁵⁹

Consequently, the MB was founded in November of 1945 in Jordan, and unlike its namesake organizations in Egypt and Syria, it did not have to work slowly and undercover to gain enough support in order to begin building its charitable organizations. They immediately began opening up branches throughout Jordan and gained quick support. King Abdullah approached the formation of the MB inside Jordan, and the possible problem it could become, from a different perspective than other leaders. Unlike Asad in Syria or Nasser in Egypt, Abdullah opted to embrace the MB with arms opened

⁵⁸ Wiktorowicz, 5.

⁵⁹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Islamists, the State, and Cooperation in Jordan,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21 (1999), 4.

wide. The after effect being that he created a loyal ally that fought for his regime and not an enemy that would be a constant threat to his rule. The fact is that the Brotherhood is given room to operate in Jordan as long as they are loyal to the king.

From the beginning of their tenure, Nasser and Asad had either held the MB at arm's length or actively fought them; at best they simply tolerated their presence which produced constant suspicion on both sides. But King Abdullah truly looked to embrace the Brotherhood and, as a consequence, always had the Brotherhood on his side when hard times came or any other group tried to challenge his power.⁶⁰ But the actions on the part of Abdullah had a beneficial secondary effect as well.

When Sadat came to power in Egypt, he encouraged the creation of Islamic groups within society with a view to marginalizing the leftist groups that were the legacy of Nasser. Sadat was successful in creating these groups and the marginalizing of the leftist groups did take place but the effort was ultimately unsuccessful as the Islamic groups themselves eventually turned on Sadat because of internal discontent. But where Sadat failed, King Abdullah succeeded. The presence of such a strong MB inside Jordan discouraged the creation of more radical Islamist groups.⁶¹ This reality was not simply due to government policies in place that hindered the creation of such groups, but it was also actively maintained by the MB itself fighting against the formation of other groups because these new groups would, if they were allowed to form, eventually draw members away from the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood also knew that if any other groups came into existence and grew to any significant size than it would be likely that the political environment would become more restrictive.

Despite this mutually beneficial relationship, there have been times of friction between the Jordanian government and the MB; times such as the King's support for Iraq in the Iran/Iraq war or Jordan's support for the Shah of Iran just before the Iranian revolution. Notwithstanding the rocky times, the Brotherhood was savvy enough to not alienate the King, his government or, possibly more importantly, the public from which

⁶⁰ Wiktorowicz, 5.

⁶¹ Isabel Kershner, "The Hashemite Kingdom of Allah," *The Jerusalem Report* (1991), 10.

they drew their support. In order to circumvent this dilemma the Brotherhood would attack the policies with which they disagreed, and not those who propagated them. Admittedly, a niggling splitting of hairs but the attacking of a nameless and faceless third party going by the name of ‘policy’ worked well.

Though history proves the reciprocal relationship between the Brotherhood and the Jordanian regime to be accurate, each of the partners in this dance are aware that they must step lightly. By this is meant that each entity, the regime and the Brotherhood, cannot step too far out of line without causing trouble and possibly ruining the current rapport that exists. On the one hand the regime cannot allow the creation of an environment that is too easy for the Brotherhood to operate in so as to achieve great success in their endeavors. To allow this would be to create the impression that the MB is all that is needed to fix society’s ills and thereby delegitimizes the government to some degree. On the other hand the MB does not want to, overtly anyway, be seen as gaining too much power; this would likely cause the government to become more restrictive in how it allows the MB to operate. This would be relatively easy enough for the regime to accomplish given that it has crafted the art of ‘bureaucratic bullying’ for years.

In fact this proved to be the case during the mid 1980s. This cooperative relationship was first strained when the Islamist opposition had gained strength because of the economic discontent of the population. Because of the perceived backing by the people of Jordan and their positions within powerful state institutions, the Islamists, the largest among them the Brotherhood, began to make demands of the regime.⁶² Consequently, the Jordanian regime was unwilling to entertain the Islamist demands and began to attack them by passing laws that restricted their ability to influence society. Since the early 1990s, the political reality inside Jordan has changed to a large degree but has not degraded to an unworkable level.

⁶² Ellan Lust-Okar, “Opposition and Economic Crisis in Jordan and Morocco” in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, ed Marsha Pripstein and Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Reinner, 2005), 156.

B. IDEOLOGY

The basic ideology that informs the actions taken by the Jordanian branch of the MB is in keeping with the other countries' branches. They are committed to changing the Jordanian political system, but without violence. They are completely non-violent and are committed to using the electoral system to obtain their political goals.⁶³ In fact, their current leader has renounced violence as a means to achieve their stated ends.⁶⁴ The social work undertaken by the Brotherhood is nearly all encompassing. The Brotherhood runs schools, sports clubs, and youth programs while they also provide health care and religious lessons, to name but a few of their programs. All these activities are geared toward the greater goal of instilling stronger Islamic values and behavior in the individuals they serve. This is in keeping with their goal of changing the political system from the bottom up, meaning that a change in the behavior of the people will ultimately change the political system. The Brotherhood's term for this is "Evolution not Revolution."⁶⁵

The phrase 'Evolution not Revolution' contains the undeclared declaration that change should come first and foremost at a cultural level. The intent on the part of the Brotherhood to change the country wholesale relies on the idea that to change the political system of a country one must first change the building blocks of the society within which it functions. And these building blocks are cultural. The Brotherhood has unmasked this intention by defining their approach to change as beginning with the individual then moving on to the family and, finally, the government.⁶⁶ The two most significant building blocks of any society, and the corresponding culture of that society, are the individual and the family.

⁶³ Noah Feldman, *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 142-143.

⁶⁴ Wiktorowicz, 93.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 94.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.

Like the other branches of the MB, the Jordanian group follows what is called the Gradualist-Pragmatic approach. This type of approach is normally seen in the larger Islamist groups and the ones that have been in existence for a long period of time. As we have seen, the MB can easily be described by both of these terms. This method of instigating change is followed by those groups who understand the likely dangers, political and otherwise, that exist inside their realm of operation so these groups “pursue policies of gradualism to heighten religio-political consciousness among the masses, while pushing for implementation of the Shari’a by the state.”⁶⁷

In keeping with their ideology of changing the government of Jordan from the ground up, the Jordanian branch of the MB has formed a political wing, the Islamic Action Front (IAF).⁶⁸ At first glance the creation of a second group apart from the Brotherhood seems like needless excess. Besides the law passed in 1966 banning Islamic NGOs from participating in politics,⁶⁹ this tactic gives both the Brotherhood and the IAF more room to move in their perspective realms. While surely members from the MB, as well as like-minded non members, populate the IAF political party the actions or stances that are taken by the party can be directly attached to it and not the Brotherhood. The same applies to the Brotherhood vis-à-vis the IAF.

This political maneuver allows the political realm to be affected by the Brotherhood, while providing a measure of protection to the Brotherhood proper to continue in their drive to continue changing the country “from below”⁷⁰ via their social programs. In a country such as Jordan where the Brotherhood in effect is allowed to operate at the pleasure of the king to have an extra layer of protection is a well thought out strategy. As far as the beliefs of the IAF go, as one can imagine, they are in line with

⁶⁷ Dekmejian, 58.

⁶⁸ Daniel Williams, “Political Islam’s Opportunity in Jordan,” *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2006, A section.

⁶⁹ George Joffe, *Jordan in Transition* (New York: Hurst & Co, 2002), 119.

⁷⁰ Tamara Cofman Wittes, “Three Kinds of Movements,” *Journal of Democracy* 19 (2008): 9.

the MB. Both the IAF and the Brotherhood have been critics, more recently than in the past, of the Jordanian government, but they have never called into question the legitimacy of the Hashemite regime.⁷¹

The development of the IAF itself came in response to favorable circumstances in the political climate that were many years in the making. The 1950s saw the Brotherhood more or less throw the mass of its efforts behind missionary work. In the 1960s, the MB switched their focus to educational programs for children and the 1970s, after success on the education side, their efforts switched to becoming active in professional organizations.⁷² This last effort had been proven a successful tactic in Egypt as many MB members took on powerful positions in civil organizations, such as unions, which ultimately led to affecting government policy.

The early 1990s saw a drastic change in the political winds. The process began in 1989 when King Hussein initiated his democratization process by slowly easing away from political restrictions. The culminating point of this process was the passing of a national charter, which saw the legalization of political parties.⁷³ After this political liberalization took place the Brotherhood wanted to get more directly involved in politics so they formed the IAF.

Though there seemingly exists little explicit evidence of the government having any deep effect on the method of operation of the MB within Jordan, it actually does exist when one compares the Jordanian MB group with those in Egypt and Syria. The governments in Egypt and Syria have always disliked the existence of the MB in their countries (with some few instances of toleration) so the interaction between these two has almost always been confrontational. But the contrary is true in Jordan and the two entities have almost always worked together.

⁷¹ Joffe, 138.

⁷² Wiktorowicz, 97.

⁷³ Lamis Adoni, "Jordan's King Embraces Pluralism with Opposition on Pluralism Widen's Monarch's Acceptance—and the Political System," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 12, 1991.

But since the Jordanian MB and the Jordanian government have always gotten along can one say that this is proof that the acceptance of the government has helped dictate the moderate methods used by the Jordanian MB? The answer to that question lies in the facts recounted regarding the changes taking place between these two since the early 1990s. As recounted above, the government has begun taking more aggressive steps against the MB because of its perception that the MB is getting too strong. In response to these new measures undertaken by the government the MB is slowly changing its stance as regards the Jordanian government. This may not yet indicate solid proof of the assertion that government has a deep role in affecting the methods adopted by the MB but fissures, not previously existing, are beginning to appear in the their previously solid rapport.

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V. THE CURRENT RAPPORT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND MB IN COUNTRIES STUDIED

A. EGYPT

The history that has been elucidated up to this point in this paper serves to give an idea of the historical beginnings of the MB, as well as how the Brotherhood interacted with the governing bodies of their day. In order for any extrapolations to be made as to the effect of government policy on an Islamist group's willingness to use violence, or other major shifts in policy, the relationship, as it exists today, between the current governments and each group, must be assessed. The history of the Brotherhood in Egypt has been a series of ups and downs with the Brotherhood being co-opted for immediate political gains on the one hand and then thrown by the wayside as quick as the political winds changed direction. That trend continues to play out today.

During the mid-1980s, the legitimacy of the Hosni Mubarak was increasingly being called into question by many in Egypt so, in an attempt to strengthen the government's standing, it began to loosen up on Islamists being involved in politics. The political space that was eventually cleared for them was mostly indirect. This liberalization of the political realm involved allowing the Brotherhood to stand in both parliamentary and local elections. This latitude did not include allowing the MB to become a legal political party but the government did go so far as to allow them to form alliances with legal parties.⁷⁴ This period turned out to be rather fruitful for the Brotherhood as they won a significant number of elected seats in the mid to late 1980s.

Whereas the 1980s looked to create a light at the end of the tunnel, the dawning of the 1990s uncovered the truth that the light was indeed an oncoming train. When the MB took to participate in elections in the 1980s there was a section of the Brotherhood that saw that involvement as a betrayal and, worse, a quasi-validation of the Mubarak regime. This episode also had the effect of stirring up more radical/militant groups, which started to cause trouble in Upper Egypt. The net effect of the trouble caused by these groups

⁷⁴ Mohammed Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 48.

actions were to culminate in a de-liberalization of the political process, reversing the liberalization process that took place in the early 1980s, by the Mubarak regime. Though many of the political parties were allowed to continue the Brotherhood faced tougher restrictions.⁷⁵

Though the Egyptian chapter of the MB does have a past that is tainted by the use of violence⁷⁶ via usage of its “special apparatus,”⁷⁷ the organization that exists today has renounced the use of violence in pursuing the implementation of their Islamist agenda. The beginnings of this change of heart by the Brotherhood actually seemed to have taken root very soon after the death of their early ideologue, Sayyid Qutb.

Like times in the not so distant past, the mid-1950s until the mid-1960s saw Egyptian prisons filled with MB members. Among these members, which included Sayyid Qutb, there was a man named Hasan al-Hudaybi who was under house arrest for 11 years. During these long years he was not seen as a primary leader within the Brotherhood but he used his time wisely as he wrote extensively on his outlook on how the Brotherhood could best achieve its aims.

Al-Hudaybi began reworking, as it were, the eventual outlook of the future Brotherhood by writing letters to other imprisoned Brotherhood members who had deep concerns on the direction of the Brotherhood. These seven letters were compiled in a book written by al-Hudaybi and published in 1969. Al-Hudaybi did not directly contradict Qutb by undermining his ideas with a comparison to his own but the two could not have come from two very different points of views.

Al-Hudaybi was one who believed in affecting the political system by negotiation and policy maneuvering. He was not at all a revolutionary but was rather a “conservative, with an upper-class outlook.”⁷⁸ The book that al-Hudaybi wrote was called *Du’at la Qudat*, it was his primary piece of work and it outlined his beliefs and how the

⁷⁵ Hafez, 52-53.

⁷⁶ John Esposito, *Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 158.

⁷⁷ Karl Yambert, ed., *The Contemporary Middle East Reader* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2006), 225.

⁷⁸ Barbara Zollner, “Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood’s Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Persecution, 1954 to 1971,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 421.

Brotherhood could achieve them. During these lean years it provided the Brotherhood sustenance by “giving theological premises and explanations, giving long overdue guidelines to the organization.”⁷⁹ It also had the effect of removing all doubt as to who held the leadership role for the group.

Now, to return to the 1990s, the approach envisioned by al-Hudaybi and practiced by the Brotherhood for the better part of a decade since the assassination of Sadat in 1981, (though the group officially renounced the use of violence in the 1970s), can be clearly seen in how the group approaches difficulties created by the Egyptian regime. At this point in time, the Egyptian regime began passing election laws that were designed to aid the government in guaranteeing that future elections saw the re-election of candidates that were in line with Mubarak. Instead of taking to the streets or choosing other ways of stirring up trouble on a broad front, the MB simply boycotted the parliamentary elections of 1990. For the 1995 elections, the Brotherhood decided to run, so the government arrested many MB members to keep them from campaigning.

The current political setting does not seem to have changed much since the 1990s. Even as late as 2007, the regime arrested many of the group’s top members on a series of charges and had them tried by military courts. During this episode, President Mubarak even went as far as to name the Brotherhood as a “danger to Egyptian security because of their religious orientation.”⁸⁰

Since the Brotherhood has formally renounced the use of violence, one might look at the resistance of the MB by the regime as somewhat overbearing. Its stated goal is indeed to change the country into an Islamic state by a gradualist approach that looks to be rather benign. Politicians are many things, and chief among them are clever pragmatists. These same politicians know that simply because a group claims that it does not use violence does not mean that it is above using it in the future if its use would look to give a distinct and clear advantage.

⁷⁹ Zollner, 421.

⁸⁰ Adam Morrow and Kahled Moussa al-Omrani, “Egypt: Muslim Brotherhood Leaders Face Military Trials,” *Global Information Network*, New York: Feb 20, 2007, 1.

Some possible evidence of the veracity of the claim of the conceivable use of violence by the Brotherhood lies at the Eastern border of Egypt, the Gaza Strip. Within the Gaza Strip, the Islamist group Hamas runs the government and generally manages the entire area. Hamas uses violence against Israel ubiquitously and they also have long standing ties to the MB. Like any sizable militant force they have need of food stuffs, weapons and ammunition and a large portion of these armaments come from inside Egypt.⁸¹ So if Hamas has long standing ties to the MB, then the possibility exists that some of this succor could be coming to Hamas with the aid, directly or indirectly, from the Brotherhood. At the very least, the Egyptian regime is hedging its bets by keeping the MB off balance inside the country, while making sure that a possible ally for the MB in the form of Hamas from making too many inroads into Egypt proper.

So it seems that the relationship between the Brotherhood and the political strata inside Egypt, regardless of who holds the reigns of political power, has not changed dramatically since the creation of the group. The contemporary situation displays the same image that the mirror of history reflects. The political ups and downs that the Brotherhood has had to deal with from its inception remains alive and well, and they currently have to contend with another down period.

B. JORDAN

Unlike the unchanged antagonistic relationship between the Egyptian government and the Brotherhood the contemporary interplay in Jordan between these two players has altered significantly. The cordial, easy going nature that has characterized the interaction between the Jordanian Monarchy and the MB has slowly degraded. The change did not happen overnight as the result of one big catastrophic event but rather, like milk left out in the sun too long, it has slowly soured. Though the relationship has changed for the worse for both players it has not yet degraded to the level of the Egyptian situation.

⁸¹ Mohammad Yaghi and David Schenker, "Hamas-Egyptian Relations Deteriorate," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 1447 (2009), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2979>.

The beginning of this change of interaction in Jordan can likely be placed at the feet of a benign and, initially, seemingly beneficial event that looked to benefit all of the parties involved. In the summer of 1991, King Hussein ratified a document that was called the 'National Charter'. This document was written by the King's royal committee and, among other things, allowed the legalization of political parties.⁸² The Charter consists of seven chapters and describes the provisions by which opposing political parties can form. These provisions include things such as no party can campaign to overthrow the monarchy and the parties cannot form militant or armed groups.⁸³

As one can see, the Charter looked to be a reasonable document that seemed to make few untenable demands. The problem turned out to be, as is usually the case in politics, with the application of the finished product. The King, after the ratification of the Charter, stated, "Every political party that comes to life in a democracy and under its protection must necessarily be a national party in its basic tents, objectives, methods, funding and affiliation. Any departure from this fact would not only be a violation of democracy, but an act against the nation."⁸⁴

This last quotation sums up the basic problem with the Charter; the monarchy holds the power of defining what is, or is not, a legitimate political party and can therefore easily dismiss or disband any party that it views to be the cause of resounding criticism. The net effect of the Charter does not look to have achieved the stated purpose of creating a more democratic Jordan, but has turned out to be simply another fulcrum which the monarchy can use to life power out of the reach of others.

Soon after the attempt at political liberalization via the National Charter and earlier attempts made in 1989, the political winds began to shift in a backward direction. In the run up to the first Gulf war in 1991 tensions, as one can imagine, in the entire region rose and Jordan did not escape these tensions. After the realization set in that the promised political changes were not going to ever be realized the Islamists started

⁸² Adoni, 6.

⁸³ Donald Kirk, "Jordan Inches towards Democracy," *The New Leader*, (1991): 5.

⁸⁴ Adoni, 7.

making more demands of the government. The government response was the Political Parties law of 1992. This law forbade political parties from using schools and religious buildings from being used for political activities. Given that these areas have historically been the life's blood for the expansion of MB membership it is clear who the government was trying to minimize.

This first rather insubstantial attempt at de-liberalization was simply the first step in a longer plan. After the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinians King Hussein saw his opportunity to create a Jordan/Israel peace agreement. Knowing the this idea would not be acceptable to the opposition in Jordan he revised the election laws just before the November 1993 elections to make sure that the elections would put the Islamists at a great disadvantage. The King also minimized any possible interference that might come from the parliament by not informing them of the peace accord between Jordan and Israel, while it was being worked in Washington, and he subsequently signed it in 1994.

Despite the political maneuvering on the part of the King, the political tensions grew rapidly on the revelation of the news of the peace treaty, and the worsening economic situation inside the country only added fuel to the raging fire. The situation called for desperate measures, and the political opposition, recognizing this fact, formed a political coalition. This coalition was truly an unexpected creation, as it was made up of groups that occupied complete opposite ends of the political spectrum that, during normal times, would be at each other's throats. Because of the strength that is found in numbers this coalition ratcheted up its demand for political change. The King's response was not unexpected, more repression.⁸⁵ This change of the relationship between the monarchy and the opposition continued throughout the 1990s, and continues to this day.

As with Egypt, Jordan looks at the power of Hamas within the Palestinian territories with trepidation. The fact that a violent Islamist group won, through elections, the leadership role of governing the Gaza Strip definitely makes the leadership of Jordan

⁸⁵ Ellen Lust-Okar, "Opposition and Economic Crises in Jordan and Morocco," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, ed Marsha Posusney and Michele Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 159-161.

take notice given the fact that the population of Jordan is over half Palestinian. Soon after the success of Hamas in the elections the leadership of Jordan took measures to repress any notions of possible success for the Islamists within Jordan's borders. To prove their commitment to suppressing the opposition the government promptly arrested four top members of the Islamic Action Front on claims that they were "fueling national discord and inciting sectarianism."⁸⁶

Though the government gave a reason for the arrests of these members of the IAF, the actual reason seems clear enough; the IAF represents the largest and strongest opposition to the Jordanian government, so successfully attacking the strongest foe first gives pause to those groups who are less able to respond in an effective manner. The actions of the government against the IAF after the success of Hamas were not based simply on paranoia. In fact the IAF is heavily populated with Palestinians and has close ties with Hamas. Azam Hunaydi, who is the leader of the IAF in the Jordanian parliament, was quoted as saying, in reference to the Hamas electoral victory, that the Islamic movement in Jordan is "mature enough to take over government responsibilities."⁸⁷

Even though some years have passed since the changing of fortunes for Hamas the contention between the IAF and the government has not lessened. The terrorist's attacks in Amman in 2005 provided a strong base, because of strong public support, for the government to launch more attacks on the Islamist opposition. It also does not appear that the IAF cares to roll back the clock to a more cordial time. The IAF leader, Zaki Bani Rusheid, was quoted as saying that the party was expecting to win the parliamentary elections in 2007 which, in turn, prompted the government to enact several measures to stop this being even remotely possible.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Sharmila Devi, "Jordan Turns its Sights on Muslim Brotherhood," *Financial Times*, June 23, 2006, London.

⁸⁷ David Eshel, "Is Jordan Threatened by Hamas?" *Military Technology* 30 (2006): 12.

⁸⁸ OxResearch. Oxford: Sept 28, 2007. 1.

This roughly sums up the situation today as it is in Jordan; the pushing and pulling that characterizes the power struggle since the late 1980s goes on. Though this struggle continues, the government still seems to have the upper hand. The Jordanian leaders have been very astute in dealing with the Islamist from the very beginnings of the modern state, and it seems to be the case that their position of strength was being slowly fortified from the early days of Abdullah I. Who the final winner will be, is anyone's guess, but the Islamists surely have their work cut out for them.

C. SYRIA

The case of Syria and the Brotherhood is decidedly less convoluted than those of Egypt and Jordan. As recounted above, this story was mostly written and placed on the shelves of history in the city of Hama in 1982 when the Syrian MB was destroyed. Though the Brotherhood is not currently a threat to the Asad regime, there may well be a mode by which they could become so, if not directly, then by proxy. The way in which the MB could once again influence internal Syrian politics from the outside is by riding the wave of Islamism that is spreading throughout the Middle Eastern region.⁸⁹

At the present time, there are four major political ideologies making deep inroads in the Middle East. These ideologies are Pan-Arab secular nationalism, state-based secular nationalism, Sunni Islamism, and Shiite Islamism. Of these four, the Sunni Islamism strand is growing the quickest, and the MB is the largest group within this movement.⁹⁰ Proof of strength, actual not anecdotal, is the way in which the Syrian regime is acting towards the Islamist movement's growth; it is trying to recast its Ba'athist socialism into a genre of "political Islam"⁹¹ to preempt the change it perceives as inevitable. It seems that the Syrian regime has noticed the possible channel for the MB to affect internal politics that is afforded by the Islamist revival, and is

⁸⁹ Sami Alrabaa, "Syria Jumps on Islamic Bandwagon," *The Jerusalem Report*, August 20, 2007, 25.

⁹⁰ Helena Cobban, "The Political Ideas Competing for Support in the Arab World," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 20, 2007, 9.

⁹¹ Alrabaa, 25.

hedging its bets. This accommodating of political Islam, as dictated by the regime, is a way for it to dampen any challenges to its rule that might come by way of the Islamist movement.

In an ironic twist, Hafiz al-Asad was fighting the Islamitization of Syrian society for many years prior to and after the defeat of the MB at Hama. The difficult problem both in Hafiz's time, and now his son's time, is the sectarian divide that exists between the Sunni majority and the various other minority communities that make up Syria.⁹² The failure of the elder Asad's regime to successfully overcome this ever present problem may be the reason why his son is looking at taking the opposite approach of co-opting Islamism to some degree. If the Brotherhood does try and use the current favorable environment to re-engage within Syria it would necessarily be by proxy, at least initially, because membership in the MB is still punishable by death in Syria.

In sum, one can see that the current relationship between the MB and host governments within Egypt, Jordan and Syria has not improved with time. Syria currently has no stated problem with the MB within their borders though they are continually on the lookout for any signs that they may be making inroads back into the country. The situation in Egypt looks to be following the historical precedent though the Mubarak administration is indeed making life ever more difficult for the MB to gain footholds in the government. And, as far as Jordan goes, the historically cordial relationship between the government and the MB is showing more numerous signs of becoming more frayed around the edges. Only time will tell how this emerging dynamic will pan out.

Now that both the historical and contemporary status, as well as the current rapport of the Brotherhood with their host nations has been examined, an exploration of government policy, past and present, towards the MB would be advantageous. The measures taken by the regimes to curtail the political power of the MB will be broken down along violent and non-violent lines. Another aspect that will be examined is the context in which each group was formed. In other words, the contemporary cultural

⁹² Levertt, 36.

situation within which each group was initially formed in each country as well as major subsequent cultural changes that might have occurred will be examined in light of the group's actions or makeup.

The shrewdness by the regimes of Egypt, Syrian and Jordan to retain political power over at least the last 80 years, knows very few limits. In any game played, the player who knows from which play book the opponent is reading gains the upper hand on the opponent. This has been, and remains, the case in these three countries where the government represents the player with the knowledge. This analogy is supported by the assertion that “mass identification via religion allows political leaders to take advantage of people and orchestrate them.”⁹³ This is not to say that the governments within these nations identify with the masses on religious grounds. What it does mean is that the leaders of these regimes recognize that the greatest immediate threat to their maintaining state power is the Islamist groups in their midst's and know they operate along religious lines so, consequently, they know how to ‘orchestrate them’ because they recognize where these religious lines lie.

D. GOVERNMENT POLICIES

1. Non-Violent Means of Oppression

One of the most broadly used measures employed to minimize the influence of the Brotherhood in the political arena is the manipulation of election laws. This tactic is what is referred to as ‘exclusionary laws’. These laws can fall within a wide range of areas from the appointment of politically loyal individuals into important government positions to the aforementioned outright changing of electoral laws. These laws create a “framework that provides authoritarian regimes with the right to exercise abundant powers” and “is thus an additional tool that allows such regimes the necessary flexibility to change the outward appearance of the system while ensuring its survival.”⁹⁴

⁹³ Tatyana, Yevgeneva, “The Myth of the ‘West’ in Russian Political Culture and its Impact on Foreign and Security Policy,” in *Russia's Place in Europe: A Security Debate. Studies in Contemporary History and Security*, ed Kurt Spillman and Andreas Wenger (Bern, Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 68.

⁹⁴ Maye Kassem, *Egyptain Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule* (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2004), 5.

By way of example, the following is a description of the way Hosni Mubarak changed electoral laws prior to the 1984 elections in Egypt. Mubarak changed the past election law of the Winner Take All (WTA) system to one of Proportional Representation (PR). On the face of it this, change seemed more rational and looked to give a greater number of individuals more of a voice in governance. But, as they say, the devil is in the details. Whereas most PR systems do in fact give a wider range of people a voice in governing, the implementation of PR in Egypt did not have this affect due to the 8 percent vote threshold that was needed by any one group to gain a seat in parliament. Though this is truly a high threshold to obtain, it would not have been insurmountable in some districts where the Brotherhood was strong. The eight percent threshold that was necessary to win was not at the local level but, instead, was at the national level. To add insult to injury the votes of any group that did not meet the threshold would automatically go to the most successful party.⁹⁵

Another example of the manipulation of the electoral laws can be taken from Jordan. After King Hussein undertook political liberalization measures in 1989, the following elections saw many of the King's opponents win, despite his attempts at manipulating the election laws to favor his regime. Consequently, the King changed the law for the 1993 elections from the colonial plurality system that he had revived in 1989, to the Single Nontransferable Vote (SNTV) system. Under the old plurality system, each citizen had three votes, so at least one of those votes would likely be cast for a candidate with whom the voter agreed on an ideological basis. The regime came to understand that the voters would vote first for their local or tribal representative, and only after would they cast a vote for an ideological figure. So in order to circumvent the vote cast for the candidate with whom they may identify on ideological grounds, King Hussein changed to the SNTV system. These are just two of the countless examples of election law 'engineering' that could be cited that demonstrate its omnipresence in the arsenal of tricks used by authoritarian rulers in these countries to guarantee their continued hold on power.

⁹⁵Marsha Posusney, "Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Election Rules and Opposition Responses," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East*, ed Marsha Posusney and Michele Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 95-96.

Before moving on to more obvious tactics that these three governments employ to enforce their will, a wider description of the genre of tactics, that the manipulating of election law falls into, would be informative. Quintan Wiktorowicz, in his piece *Embedded Authoritarianism*, does a good job of summing up this form of repression. Specifically speaking about Jordan, though his elucidation can quite easily be transferred onto the other two countries examined in this thesis, Wiktorowicz describes the changes that occurred in 1989 because of political liberalization, as nothing more than window dressing in that what was truly changed were simply the words used to describe a fundamentally unchanged political system. In an effort to describe the actual political reality, he coined the phrase ‘embedded authoritarianism’ with a view to stripping away the façade so craftily built by the government.

In essence, embedded authoritarianism is “social control projected through a complex array of administrative procedures, legal codes, and informal regulative practices designed to constrain opposition without resorting to violence.”⁹⁶ This term fits not only to describe the way in which election laws are manipulated, but also precisely encompasses the endless other non-violent means by which entrenched regimes stack the deck against opponents.

2. Violent Means of Oppression

Another widely used tactic employed by these governments to stunt the accumulation of power by the Brotherhood (though less so by Jordan), is physical repression. This genre of maneuver can take many forms from simply putting MB members in jail for a few days in order to keep them from campaigning to arrests that lead to years in prison or, more rarely, killing.

In 1948, after the monarchy realized that the Brotherhood constituted the most formidable challenge to its rule, the MB was dissolved as a legal organization. The banning of the Brotherhood was the ultimate result of violent protests and assassinations of political figures in which the Brotherhood took part. This period ultimately ended with

⁹⁶ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “‘Embedded Authoritarianism,” in *Jordan in Transition*, ed. George Joffe’ (New York: Hurst & Co., 2002), 111.

the assassinations of the Egyptian Prime Minister and Hasan al-Banna. Some years later, after more riots in the streets to push the British out of Egypt, a *coup d'état* led by Gamal Nasser overthrew the monarchy. In the first few years of the new government the Brotherhood was left to its own devices, but this new found leeway did not last long. During a power struggle in the Nasser led Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the Brotherhood threw their support behind Nasser's opponent. After the power struggle was resolved and the smoke cleared Nasser was the one left standing. This put the MB in a precarious situation, to say the least, and relations between the MB and Nasser quickly degraded. Things eventually came to a head with the attempted assassination of Nasser in October of 1954. Recognizing the opportunity afforded him by this attempt on his life Nasser's blamed the Brotherhood and wholesale repression ensued. More than four thousand MB members were arrested of which six were executed and others imprisoned for life.⁹⁷

An almost identical set of circumstances as those transpiring in Egypt, was forming in Syria at about the same time. Adib al-Shishakli, an officer in the Syrian military, came to power in 1949 after his coup attempt met with success. He never formally took the title of president or prime minister, but chose to rule through a proxy, a man named Colonel Fawzi Selu; though Selu had the title of head of state and Shishakli that of commander-in-chief, it was solely the latter who ruled Syria until 1954. After many failed policies and generally complete mismanagement of the national government, Shishakli's leadership began to feel resistance from all sides. To discourage any credible opposition, the government dissolved the Brotherhood in Syria, closing down all of its social work projects. These actions, in conjunction with a servile military establishment, solidified Shishakli's rule.⁹⁸

Though the repression of the Brotherhood in Syria at this time was not as severe as that of their Egyptian brothers, it proved to be enough to ensure Shishakli's rule for some time. The more severe repression of the Syrian MB did not come until the 1970s

⁹⁷ Dekmejian, 77.

⁹⁸ Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 118-123.

when the Brotherhood tried to assassinate President Hafiz al-Asad. The years following the assassination attempt were full of conflict between the government and the Brotherhood which only came to a conclusion in Hama in 1982, as was recounted above.

The country of Jordan, in contrast to the other two countries, has had a primarily non-confrontational affiliation with the Brotherhood. But since the death of King Hussein in 1999, and the subsequent takeover of power by his son Abdullah, this relationship has slowly degraded. There has been no effort on the part of the new monarch to fix the election laws and he even uses the emergency laws to manipulate the law as he sees fit.⁹⁹ There have been more instances of the IAF boycotting elections and generally making trouble for the Hashemite regime though not as of yet calling its credibility into question. Recently, there have been events that call into question the possibility of this historical relationship remaining unchanged.

Though the Jordanian regime has not used violence against the MB, recent events may provide a clue as to its willingness to use whatever means it deems necessary to protect its position. In November 2002, the Jordanian military took over the southern Jordanian town of Maan. The town was harboring dozens of militant Islamists and the government demanded their release but the town refused. The use of the military led to success in arresting the militants, though at some cost in lives, but it also achieved another aim. It sent a message to Islamist groups inside Jordan that the government would have no qualms about using the military to achieve its ends if the need arose.¹⁰⁰ In truth, these actions were not perpetrated directly against the MB, but it serves to prove that the regime is not above using violent means to subdue dissent regardless of the history between them.

Up to this point, the tactics used by the governments of Egypt, Jordan and Syria against the MB in order to minimize their impact on their prospective societies have all been rather direct in their approach. Without doubt, some such as the manipulation of the

⁹⁹ Fathi Schirin, "Jordanian Survival Strategy: The Election Law as a Safety Valve," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, 2005: 891.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Pelham, "Jordan in Harsh Show of Force towards Internal Dissidents," *The Financial Times*, November 13, 2002.

law to favor the regime, have a veneer of legitimacy, but this guise remains intact only until the moment the most superficial investigation is undertaken. Though at times the direct approach can be the best solution to a problem, politics is rarely so straightforward, and the leaders of these nations know this truth well. This, in turn, leads to the last tactic that will be discussed employed by the leaders, a tactic that, on its face, does not portray itself as such. This tactic is the act of co-optation.

Co-optation is meant to mean the action by the governments themselves of not ostracizing or clashing with the MB, but instead making them feel a part of the political process. In truth, this looks simply like a rational, fair minded approach to dealing with a powerful opponent; hence its power. At one time or another, all of these countries have had a leader in power that has used this stratagem. In Egypt, the toleration of the Brotherhood has been an on and off affair even up to today. The Brotherhood was given broad latitude to operate in the first years of the revolution¹⁰¹ up until Nasser outlawed the group in 1954. Even in Syria, there was a small window in the mid-1950s when they were granted legal status by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰² The story in Jordan has been one of total cooptation by the monarchy there since its inception and only recently has serious trouble between the government and the Brotherhood began to strain this interaction.

At first glance, cooptation may not seem like a method of repression. But if within the definition of repression there exists the intention of regulating the accumulation of power by a likely political rival what better way to restrict this growth than by determining when, where and how much power is obtained? The very closeness of the MB to the regime via cooptation, allows the regime to control outside influences that could benefit the Brotherhood while, at the same time, having one less blatant enemy to have to deal with.

¹⁰¹ Dekmejian, 77.

¹⁰² Teitelbaum, 153.

The measures employed by the governments of these nations to weaken the attempts of the MB to attain power, add credibility to the assertion that the MB tailors its operational methods to governmental action against the group. Where there has been violence against the MB, as in Egypt and Syria, there has been a response in kind from the MB. Also, where there has been non-violent action taken by the government, as in the cooptation scheme in Jordan, there has been no violence from the MB. Another example of non-violence comes from Syria. In the early years of MB influence in Syria, before the rise of Hafez al-Asad, the MB worked within the political realm and only became truly violent when the state used it against them.

VI. COMPARISON OF GROUPS

A. EGYPT

The preceding chapters have described the histories of three MB groups from their very beginnings to include their ideological underpinnings. The groups in Syria and Jordan were created by men who learned many of the skills needed to create and run their perspective groups either through time spent in the MB in Egypt, or from direct contact with the movement's original founders or ideologues. This last chapter will outline the trajectory of each group from the days of its inception up to the time of the destruction of the Brotherhood in Syria in 1982. The core purpose of this chapter is to examine significant events that occurred in these countries during this timeframe, to understand cultural/political events, and to measure any repercussions that they would have had on the Brotherhood. This comparison will take into account not only political forces specific to each country, but will also examine any social or demographic stresses that could have had an impact on the groups.

The external forces that feed into the collective pulse of a nation can be similar in kind between nations, but are usually very different in degree. Colonialism, for example, has left its legacy on most Middle Eastern nations, though some nations have had better success at overcoming the various negative consequences left by it than others. During the years of, and prior to, the initial creation of the Brotherhood in Egypt the population had two great desires, to remove their shared burden embodied in the corrupt king and drive out the British.¹⁰³ This unconscious like-minded agreement that pervaded the majority of the population helped to aid in the acceptance of the ideas spread by Hasan al-Banna and the creation of the MB.

¹⁰³ Hesham Al-Awadi, *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak, 1982-2000* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2004), 31.

Not only did the pulse of the times aid in recruitment for the Brotherhood, it also aided in allowing Nasser to obtain political power. Both Nasser and the Brotherhood rode the wave of popularity that followed the success of the revolution until Nasser began suppressing the Islamist group in 1953-4. The success of the revolution eventually satisfied the public appetite to be rid of the King and the British influence, but was to create new social dynamics that would roil and foment and would eventually play into the hands of the Brotherhood. The abundant social changes that took place under the direction of Nasser were the driving force behind these new social dynamics.

After Nasser took power, he quickly began sweeping social changes. He implemented land reform, which limited land holdings to no more than 200 acres per person.¹⁰⁴ This was only the very beginning of changes that would ultimately result in the National Charter of 1962. The charter gave the government the right to nationalize any private company it chose to but it also had very personal effects on the population. It recognized the citizen's rights "to social welfare such as education, health care, employment, minimum wage and social insurance for the elderly."¹⁰⁵ The National Charter and the land reform each had provided a great influence on the social makeup of Egypt partly by growing the middle class and reducing the power of the feudal landlords who had held a position of prestige for many years.

During the pre-Nasser years, the monarchy followed a liberal model of economic development while Nasser, after he had taken over the reins of government, followed a socialist model of economic development. Each of Nasser's programs had limited success but they ultimately failed in solving the majority of Egypt's economic woes.¹⁰⁶ Though Nasser's attempt at socialism did not have the wide ranging affect that he hoped it would have it did create some positive outcomes, such as elevating the numbers of individuals that would receive an education. This fact in itself cannot be considered as a negative but its secondary effects were, and remain, very detrimental. One such harmful effect is

¹⁰⁴ Ibrahim Aoude, "From National Bourgeois to Intifah: Egypt 1952-1992," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16, 1994: 1.

¹⁰⁵ Aoude, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Eric Davis, "Islamic Radicalism in Modern Egypt," in *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 139.

centered in the subsequent failure of Nasser's program to invigorate the Egyptian economy, the lack of the creation of enough jobs. It is without doubt that educating a greater proportion of any population is a laudatory achievement but there must also be corresponding success in job creation for the newly educated to be gainfully employed or trouble could soon follow.

The phenomenon of having more educated people than jobs, where the newly educated could exercise their talents, points us to inquire into the membership of the Brotherhood. The initial makeup of the Brotherhood's membership when it was a fledgling organization is mostly unknown,¹⁰⁷ but subsequent studies have shed light on the matter. Initially anecdotal evidence pointed to the membership being populated by individuals that possessed only a rudimentary education. But further study has revealed that the reality was actually the opposite, most of the members were urban professionals from the middle class.¹⁰⁸

The use of the term 'urban' here can be misleading, because it can lead one to believe that the members were always city dwellers, but that is not the case. The members were urban in the sense that they, in fact, did live in the cities but the majority of them had come from rural settings where they had grown up and had only recently transferred to the city. The relevance being that, though the members were highly educated, they had grown up and matured in a very conservative environment which is likely what drew them to the Brotherhood. So an indirect consequence, and undoubtedly completely unintentional, of the failure of Nasser's socialist policies to energize the Egyptian economy coupled with his policy of educating a broader range of Egyptians, led to more individuals strengthening one of his strongest political rivals, the MB, via either increased membership or increased sympathizers.

¹⁰⁷ Davis, 136.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 141.

Nasser then began aggressively subduing the Brotherhood in 1954, and even executed six and put over 1,000 more on trial after the attempt on his life.¹⁰⁹ The humbling that the MB endured at the hands of Nasser had far reaching affects that seeped into almost every portion of the group. A large number of the top leaders of the Brotherhood were jailed for many years. These years turned out to be a very dark period for the MB not only for the depravity of prison life but also because of the questioning of the validity of some of the precepts from which the MB operated. This began a time of “vibrant internal struggles during the period of imprisonment.”¹¹⁰ The internal struggle that transpired during the prison years had the effect, salutary to some yet disgusting to others, of moderating their stance towards radical premises.¹¹¹

Though the bulk of the MB was imprisoned, the group itself continued to function though at a less effective level and another round of repression hampered it even more, this time to an even greater degree. The 1967 war with Israel did tremendous damage to the Nasser regime and disillusioned the majority of the population with the failure of Nasser’s Arab Nationalism. Even with this defeat, Nasser was able to hold on to power, but he did begin to back away from some of his more repressive programs and, responding to public outcry, began allowing some liberalization of the economy. These changes even bode well for the Brotherhood. As Nasser searched for even more legitimacy via Islam, he began to release MB members from prison, and by 1971, only about 140 remained incarcerated.¹¹²

After the death of Gamal Nasser in 1970, Anwar Sadat became president. In his search for legitimacy Sadat began empowering Islamist groups to fight the leftist influence left over from the Nasser years. This strategy by Sadat went a long way in

¹⁰⁹ Aoude, 2.

¹¹⁰ Zollner, 411.

¹¹¹ Zollner, 412.

¹¹² Al-Awadi, 35.

“promoting Islamist militancy”¹¹³ and, consequently, the MB. Though this did have a positive effect on the Brotherhood the circumstances that developed after the victory in the 1973 war would ultimately be more far reaching.

After Egypt’s victory in 1973, Sadat attempted to ride his wave of popularity by instituting many new policies. One of these new policies was called *al-infitah*, or opening to the west. This policy was aimed at drawing in foreign capital, mainly from the west, to create and strengthen the Egyptian private sector.¹¹⁴ This policy did in fact work in making some Egyptians very wealthy but too many people felt no positive change from the policy. Rising inflation helped to increase unrest with the *infitah* policies and the conspicuous spending habits of the recently wealthy capitalists which were offspring of the same *infitah* did much to undermine Sadat.¹¹⁵

The examples given by no means accounts for every event that affected the actions and ideology of the Egyptian MB but they do serve to relay an idea of some of the major happenings that determined the direction of their policy and their resiliency. At this point we will look at the events and political environment that helped to shape the Syrian branch of the MB.

B. SYRIA

The case of Syria and the facts on the ground differ significantly from that of Egypt, despite each having a long history with dictatorial regimes. At first glance, Syria does not look like an area of the world that outside powers would or should have a deep interest in, given its lack of any appreciable amount of natural resources. But, in actuality, outside powers have been acutely interested in Syria because it occupies a crossroads and “whoever would lead the Middle East, must control her.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Curtis R. Ryan, “Political Strategies and regime Survival in Egypt,” *Journal of Third World Studies* 18 (2001): 28.

¹¹⁴ Dekmejian, 80.

¹¹⁵ Ryan, 28.

¹¹⁶ Seale, 1.

Social dynamics in Syria were also much different than in Egypt. Egypt is a nation made up of predominantly Sunni Muslims with small minorities of other groups such as Coptic Christians. Despite its numerical superiority the Arab population within Syria is “riven with sectarian cleavages.”¹¹⁷ The Sunni Muslim population within Syria does constitute the largest group in the nation but there are significant minorities of Alawis, Greek Orthodox Christians and Syrian Christians. There are also smaller numbers of minorities made up of Syrian Catholics, Maronites and Armenian Orthodox. This cultural dynamic alone does have an effect on how boldly the MB could move when trying to influence change. Though these diverse groups assuredly at times work at cross purposes to the MB there was one constant that affected all of them, with the exception of the Alawis, from the mid 1960s and that was the “...murderous regime of Hafiz Asad.”¹¹⁸

The Brotherhood in Syria also had a major constituency difference in that they were a predominantly urban organization, and did not have much luck penetrating into the countryside, like their Egyptian counterparts, or into the military establishment, likely due to the tight control of the military by Asad.¹¹⁹ The practical outcome of this reality is that the bulk of the Brotherhoods work and influence was limited to Damascus and Aleppo which constitute two-thirds of the urban population in Syria.¹²⁰

Like other nations in the region during the first half of the 20th century, the people of Syria were compelled by gaining independence and domestic troubles that were increasingly the product of struggles between the middle and lower classes.¹²¹ Though the independence issue stretched beyond the reach of the Brotherhood it aided generously to the political strengthening of both classes especially during the time period in which they were most politically active prior to the coup of Za'im in 1949¹²² and up to their suppression by Shishakli in 1952.

¹¹⁷ Levertt, 2.

¹¹⁸ Abd-Allah, 15.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 92.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹²¹ Ibid., 92.

¹²² Ibid., 93.

Hafiz Asad did not obtain full governing power over Syria until 1970 but the years between 1952 and 1970 are instructive in the development of the MB's in Syria. Beginning around 1952 the repression of the Brotherhood became more of a rule rather than an exception. Soon after this reality set in with the leadership of the MB the group gradually started to back away from political involvement of any type. Despite this retreat from politics the Brotherhood was repressed even more aggressively after the union, called the United Arab Republic, between Egypt and Syria from 1958-1961.¹²³

The disorganization of the MB, caused by the repression, was deepened when in 1963 the leader of the MB in Syria was exiled when the Ba'ath party came to power. In 1969, an even greater problem for the Brotherhood appeared in the form of a leadership crisis. Their leader in exile, Isam Al-Attar, was stripped of his leadership role due to disagreement from other top members because of some of his policies.¹²⁴ The Brotherhood was harried almost continuously and kept on the defensive until the defeat of Syria at the hands of Israel in 1967, which put an end to the popularity of Arab nationalism. At this time some members of the Syrian MB started to find their feet after years of oppression but the leadership crisis of 1969-70 led to a split in the Syrian MB that was not resolved until just before their defeat at Hama. This time period also allowed Marwan Hadid to begin his machinations that started his violent crusade against the Asad regime and ended with his group's defeat at the hands of the same regime.

The 'years in the wilderness' (1952 – 1970) that one may define during which the MB suffered were very detrimental to the group's expansion. Their continued harassment by the state was a major factor that retarded their development but was not, by far, the only barrier they had to surmount. There was the persistent problem of having to take direction from a leadership that was constrained to act from afar coupled with an ever changing government establishment. From 1949 until 1970 when Hafiz Asad came to

¹²³ Adb-Allah, 100.

¹²⁴ Adrienne, 86.

power there was a total of twenty coup or coup attempts.¹²⁵ Given this fact, any direction that did come from the Brotherhood leadership in exile would be useful only for a short period of time because the enemy, the government, was always changing.

The reality that a clear majority of the Syrian population is Sunni Muslim, could cause one to foster the idea that support for the MB cause would not be difficult to obtain. At some level, this is true, but not to the degree that one might expect by just looking at the numbers. Asad also recognized this natural advantage that fell to the Brotherhood so he moved quickly to devise a social policy to undermine it. The success of this policy was instrumental in keeping the support for the Brotherhood, until the rapid rise of Islamism in Syria in the late 1970s, within a manageable range.

The social policy of the Asad regime was focused on both the minorities and the Sunni majority in Syria. Among the enticements Asad used to obtain the loyalty of these groups, were things such as land reform in the countryside and economic incentives that would target supplying aid to the “ex-peasant” elements of the population.¹²⁶ These reforms worked just well enough and garnered just enough support from diverse groups to allow him to not rely exclusively on an Alawi base. Asad also was aware of the MB’s influence in the urban centers that housed the large Sunni population, so he focused the efforts of the social policy on garnering support from rural Sunnis who had no affinity for the brand of Islam that the MB was preaching. In conjunction with his co-opting support from rural Sunnis, and with a view to enhancing this support in absolute terms, Asad used heavily coercive tactics against the urban Sunnis when necessary in order to make them think twice before supporting the Brotherhood.

The sectarian divides inside Syria remains a difficult problem. In addition to the government’s tactics to attenuate the MB in every sense, the historical problem of the many sectarian divides had a deep impact on the ability of the MB in Syria to gain large amounts of power easily. Any efforts that the Brotherhood could have conceived of to undermine the regime’s power would have to necessarily take into account the effects

¹²⁵ Levertt, 23.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 25.

that these endeavors would have on other minority groups and to what extent. Other smaller and less powerful groups may seem only a nuisance to any larger group but if too many small groups are aggrieved by the action of the MB than they could possibly find themselves facing one newly formed, upset mass rather than a few disparate groups.

The fifteen years or so of little to no leadership and the rough, continual suppression by the many different governments during the same time period also did not provide the opportunity for any appreciable gathering of strength for the Brotherhood. The environment of continually changing and ineffective governance within a given country can provide space for groups such as the MB to grow without much external interference but during these same years the Syrian MB had to overcome leadership issues as well as divisions within their own ranks.

The diverse challenges to the Syrian MB, with the exception of their few years of political activity early on, had a considerable effect on the make-up of the group. It was not simply the political oppression during the bulk of their existence that affected it but also the myriad cultural matters that are so much a part of the Syrian history. If many of these sectarian issues did not exist it could have been feasible during the many years of political unrest, and before the rise of Asad, the population could have turned to the Brotherhood and their strength would have increased.

C. JORDAN

The history recounted earlier demonstrates the case of the MB within Jordan is unlike its experience inside Egypt and Syria. Because of the fundamentally different historical experience that the MB traversed in Jordan, recounting the factors that affected their development are less blatantly ‘in your face’ and so are somewhat more difficult to surmise. Though the history of the Brotherhood in Jordan is filled with decidedly fewer bracing circumstances, of great importance, that highlight their molding, the conditions that it did live through are no less informative for understanding how Islamist groups react to their immediate surroundings.

The most consistent molding force since the creation of the MB in Jordan, is the fact that the country has had a steady line of stable successors, unlike Egypt and Jordan. Jordan has had only three different heads of state since the assassination of King Abdullah I in 1951, and all of these have been from the same family. This is not to say that there have not been challenges to the rulers but, all in all, the trouble has been minor and quickly contained. The faction of the Brotherhood that grew in Jordan never had to suffer under a Head of State that one day pretended friendship and the next threw them into prison, like in Egypt, or a national leader that simply hunted them wherever they were to be found, such as in Syria.

As stated earlier, the MB had enjoyed relative freedom of movement from their very beginnings when they were accepted and legitimized by King Abdullah I. Each subsequent Head of State has followed the lead of the first King and, despite some rocky times in the past, only recently has even some hint of real trouble between the Monarchy and the MB begun to appear. The current King has begun resorting back to the old trick of manipulating the election laws to try and minimize the rise of fundamentalist Islamist groups inside the country.

It may appear that because of the cooperation between the MB and the Jordanian government, there is little by way of instruction to draw from this background; however, this is not the case. The historical amiability between these two entities has had both good and bad consequences for the MB. On the good side, the Brotherhood has had deep access to the state government for many years via state employment. The Brotherhood exists in all levels of government to include Ministry positions.¹²⁷ The Brotherhood has also enjoyed the special distinction of being the only Islamic NGO that has the open support of the Jordanian government. On the negative side of things, the very essence of who the MB is or should be, has been, and continues to be, questioned by other Islamist groups outside of Jordan.¹²⁸ The simple fact that the MB has worked for such a long time

¹²⁷ Wiktorowicz, 11.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 12

arm and arm, as it were, with the rulers of Jordan tends to make outside groups believe that the Jordanian MB has fallen victim to a Middle Eastern version of the Stockholm Syndrome.

The demographics and cultural influence on the MB of Jordan is a tougher knot to unravel. While the demographic makeup of Egypt, and Syria has had a noted and even an extensive effect on the Brotherhood and how it operates the demographic, effect is less clear in Jordan. It is clear that there are a very large number of Palestinians within Jordan, but the government has purposefully kept the numbers from the most recent census strictly secret.¹²⁹ There is no doubt that the numbers of the non-Jordanian Palestinians in Jordan is rising, but no one knows for certain to what absolute level. This may seem of little consequence but ever since the HAMAS electoral victory in Gaza in 2006 the Jordanian regime is continually concerned about the non-East Bank (non-native Jordanians) Palestinian population. This also aids in straining the relationship between the MB and the Jordanian government due to the fact that HAMAS is a faction of the Egyptian MB.

¹²⁹ Wiktorowicz, 86.

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VII. CONCLUSION

The history recounted above describes facts that occurred in the formative years of the MB in the three countries studied. Undoubtedly, these facts serve to build a somewhat coherent picture of the history of these groups, but possessing this information, when compared in the light of the experience of the MB groups in other countries, can help build insight into how to deal with other groups of a similar stripe. The history that was conveyed, concentrated on three main forces and their subsequent effects, that aided in shaping the groups studied: the political and the demographic environment within each country and the general environment created by these two forces that the group mature within.

The political environment that the Brotherhood was constrained to work within, without question, had a tremendous effect on how the organization could act. Of the three MB groups studied, the Syrian branch ceases to exist. The history of the group within Syria bears this out to be a not unsurprising reality. The group's early history in the country gave them little chance to plant deep and healthy roots, due to its fragmented leadership and the ever changing political environment. When a stable government finally did take shape, it was extremely brutal in its repression of the Brotherhood and was willing to employ any measure, no matter how violent, to subdue them.

Similar political pressures were applied to the Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, but with decidedly different outcomes. In Egypt the Brotherhood remains one of the strongest opposition groups in the country but the repressive and political measures of past regimes, as well as past failures by the Brotherhood, have caused them to back away from using violence in their ever present battle against the current state. The case of Jordan is instructive in its opposite effect. The political environment in Jordan has always been willing to accommodate the MB and give it room to operate. The consequence being that the two entities have almost always worked together. Only within the last decade or so is this relationship showing signs of changing for the worse.

These facts seem to indicate that the political/cultural environment under which the MB groups operate heavily influence the actions that the groups are willing to engage in. The more violent the political environment, as demonstrated by the case of Syria, the more aggressive the actions undertaken by the Brotherhood. In contrast, and possible support for the assertion made of the Egyptian case, Jordan's permissive political environment has served to keep the MB in line as evidenced by the fact that the group has never used violence against the Hashemite regime and remains a political force in the country.

The demographics specific to each country have also had an effect on the Brotherhood even if, in lieu of well researched empirical data, the conclusions presented here are somewhat anecdotal. The support of the population is tremendously important for any anti-state organization operating within a nation's borders if it is to have any hope of success. Support from the population becomes even more important in direct proportion to the suppressive measures employed by the country's government. Again, Syria is a prime example.

When Hafiz Asad came to power in 1970, his repression of the Brotherhood was heavy handed almost without pause. Consequently, the support from the population that was needed by the MB was difficult to obtain given the deep sectarian divides not only in the country as a whole but also because of the divides that existed in the Sunni majority. Regardless of the support that the MB began to build because of the rising wave of Islamism in the early 1980s, it proved to be not enough to avoid their destruction by the regime.

Without doubt, the MB in Egypt has suffered under heavy repressive measures throughout the years, but has not been destroyed. Part of the explanation as to why this is the case may well be due to strong support from the 90% Sunni majority. Egypt does have some minority communities, but is not beset by the same severity of sectarian divides like that of Syria. Also, if there are restraints put on the measures that the MB can legitimately use against the regime, and still retain support from the population, then the

same restraint applies to the government. That is, it is a restraint if the government does not wish to become, or be seen as, a totalitarian regime which, incidentally, Syria was and is.

The history of each of these nations demonstrates some very large differences between the countries. These differences include demographic variables, different colonial histories by different colonial powers and different types of governments to name but a few. Despite these differences the MB still sprung up and grew within the boundaries of these nations. The fact is that the populations of each of these nations, at a cultural level, were not being provided with what was needed. This void felt by the people goes beyond their simple physical needs, which the MB has been instrumental in providing where the governments were failing, and points to something deeper. The governments of each of these nations used cultural differences to separate and divide, whereas the MB offered an alternative where all could huddle under one umbrella, the *Umma*. This will surely not appeal to everyone, but if compared to the alternative, and the last fifty plus years has proven the realities of that alternative, it may not seem that bad to many.

To conclude, it seems that both the political and the demographic environment has a significant affect on the MB groups that operate within Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The degree to which each area affects the groups more profoundly is dependent on many factors, but likely this effect is not static and ebbs and flows with the prevailing political and cultural winds.

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